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The privileged classes.



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THE PRIVILEGED CLASSES

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THE PRIVILEGED CLASSES

BY
BARRETT WENDELL

11

"Some said, 'John, print it'; others said, 'Not so;'
Some said, 'It might do good'; others said, 'No.'"

—BUNYAN.

NEW YORK
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1908

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Published October, 1908



NOTE

IN 1904 I was invited to give the Commencement address at Haverford College. This address, subsequently published in the "North American Review," under the title of "Our National Superstition," was kindly received, though not without dissent. A similar reception, wherein more dissent was apparent, met an address on "The Privileged Classes" which I gave before the Twentieth Century Club, of Chicago, in January, 1908, and which appeared, a few days later, in the "Boston Transcript." It has seemed worth while to put these papers in more nearly permanent form, and to add to them two others, here published for the first time, which at once indicate how the earlier written are related

NOTE

and somewhat develop the suggestions implied in them. Together the four make a consecutive book. Though for thorough treatment such matters as are thus brought to mind demand the full authority of expert training, they are perhaps of enough general interest to warrant occasional discussion by one who can pretend to no more authoritative character than that of a man of letters.

B. W.

NAHANT, MASSACHUSETTS,
28 *July*, 1908.

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I

THE PRIVILEGED CLASSES

An address given before the Twentieth Century Club, of Chicago, in January, 1908, and subsequently printed in the Boston *Evening Transcript*.

I

THE PRIVILEGED CLASSES

It is the privilege of a man of letters that he may venture on occasion to discuss matters in which he makes no pretence to be expert. Such utterances claim no authority; they are worth exactly as much respect or neglect as their common sense may happen to command. The very fact, however, that their whole justification lies in their common sense—that is, in the degree to which they express such opinions as would generally arise in rational but inexpert minds, confronted with problems—gives them occasional value. If they prove on the whole true, they help us to see the truth somewhat more

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distinctly than might otherwise be the case. If false, they do little harm; indeed, they may even then do a shade of good by demonstrating the man of letters who utters them to be without the common sense on which he has endeavoured to rely, and therefore to be negligible unless he have the happiness to be amusing.

Some such considerations as these have emboldened me, a man of letters who has been pondering of late both in America and in France, to define, for myself and for whoever cares to follow my line of thought, certain opinions concerning social tendencies forced on my attention in both countries. For amid the many and wide differences of temper which distinguish our elderly American republic from the youthful republic across the Atlantic, there is one popular impulse in which the two

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agree. The sentiment of the United States and of contemporary France is deeply at one in its condemnation of political or social privilege. No aggressions are more honestly detestable to either than those of a privileged class.

Just what we mean by a privileged class may not be quite easy to define. The term, however, evokes in our minds a traditionally familiar, though rather nebulous, image of a body of people permitted by custom, and often by positive law as well, not only to enjoy immunities of various kinds from the political and social burdens borne by the generality of their compatriots, but also to possess opportunities for various agreeable careers from which unprivileged mortals are debarred. In just such discussions as ours we may permit ourselves freedom from

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scientific exactitude of phrase. For our present purposes, it is enough if we may agree that the type of a privileged class, as conceived nowadays, is the kind of human being whom we popularly suppose to have been incarnate in the nobility and the clergy of France before the French Revolution. Gargantuan we may call its portentous aspect, if we remember the grotesquely colossal figure familiar for three centuries and more in the undying work of Rabelais. A more modern expression of the same opinion is almost as familiar in the tirade of Figaro, detailing, at a moment when the American Revolution was a reality and the French Revolution close at hand, how the privileged classes who have blocked his way right and left have done nothing to warrant their pretensions beyond taking the trouble to be born.

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Already we can begin to feel, as good Americans, how and why they were detestable—those privileged classes of an elder time swept out of existence by the Revolution. They pretended to inherent superiority, which they would not put freely to the test of competition. They seized on more than their share of the good things of this world. Secure from wholesome rivalry, they did very negligently what work of one kind or another they still did at all. To no small degree, they drew their support from public funds, the product of taxation in various forms. Generally free from direct taxation, they were cynically or at best irresponsibly indifferent to the increasing burden of taxation which their slothful extravagance imposed on others than themselves. One might go on indefinitely, adding unwinsome traits to the picture of

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the dreadful things which used to exist. That it is photographically true, historically indisputable, we need not pretend. That it is substantially faithful to what countless millions of humanity have honestly believed, both in the days of privilege and in the happier days which have ensued, nobody, I think, will deny. And the hatefulness of a privileged class, among ourselves and among our fellow Republicans of modern France,—throughout our aurally enlightened modern world, one might better say,—may be summed up in our common condemnation of any human being who takes on earth, by sheer force, more room than he has honestly earned here.

The abiding faith which gives life to enduring democracy is of another stripe than that which ever made privileged classes possible. Where any man is

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born democracy never cares to inquire. Its one eager demand is that, so far as may be here below, every man shall have his deserts—that careers shall be open to talent, and that no artificial devices shall either block its progress, or keep incapacity in positions of authority. That this ideal end can never be quite attained in no wise impairs the inspiring vitality of its ideal. Any fact, any tendency which seems to favour it, we eagerly welcome. Any which threatens to obstruct it we distrust and condemn. Some such menace of obstruction has appeared, to recent apprehension, in various aspects of wealth and of fashion. Without a conscious tinge of envy, hatred, or malice,—with consciences serenely void of uncharitable offense,—innumerable good people everywhere hold them threatening to human progress; and nowhere more

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than in the United States. A glance at any of the more popular newspapers, daily or weekly, which form the staple of literature for contemporary America, will demonstrate our national sentiment concerning these matters. Take a half-hour's journey anywhere, in electric cars or by railway. If our pervasive detestation of privilege have not been presented to your eyes by more than one Gargantuan image in modern guise, you may rest content that you have been preserved from the ugly apparition only by miracle. Hardly a day passes without some new caricature, published by the thousand, of a big-bellied, whiskered, bejewelled, grinning monster, complacently or cynically thrusting his lesser fellow-creatures out of his overgrown way. Gargantuan, Pharaonic, vulgar, these monstrous incarnations of contemporary wealth are as familiar to

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the eyes of American children nowadays as the Lord's Prayer ever was to the lips of Puritan infancy in old New England.

If you begin to ponder on this unlovely image, however, you will grow aware that it meets your eyes only in the transitory, recurrent pages of our popular journals. In actual life you will look for it in vain. No such creature as it represents ever actually burdened our American earth with its ponderous flesh and blood; rather it is a contemporary troll, or giant, or ogre. Fantastic monsters we know that these were—nightmares and bugbears, not realities. Something like them, we may presently begin to surmise, is all that these unalluring idols in modern guise actually amount to. No one would seriously pretend that complete equality can anywhere be

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discerned in the course of nature—inanimate, brute, or human. No one would soberly deny, for example, that some human beings are more beautiful than others, some stronger, some more intelligent, some more gifted with the power of singing or of playing on the piano, some with that of controlling politics or of administering the law, some with the faculty of directing their economic energies to fruitful ends—in other words, the faculty of making money. What everybody would deny is that any such superiority or advantage of nature may justly demand more physical room in this world than a single American citizen is fairly entitled to by the mere fact of his existence.

For a good while, accordingly, I was accustomed, as a man of letters, to regard the Gargantuan images of the daily prints—at least in their outward

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and visible aspect—as sheer figments of the imagination. By-and-by, however, an every-day incident in electric cars began to force on my notice the indisputable fact that we are frequently exposed to a physical experience grotesquely like that inflicted on unimportant fellow-creatures by the big-bellied monsters of caricature. Electric cars are provided with only a limited number of seats, to one of which, so long as any remains unoccupied, the payment of your fare is supposed to entitle you. Again and again, after worthy citizens have duly paid their fares, I have observed them, particularly of a late afternoon, compelled to stand up, not because all the seats were actually taken, but because the greater part of their seated fellow-passengers insisted in sitting with the legs at right angles, thereby occupying two places instead

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of one. If asked to move, these enthroned beings resented the request in a manner so surly that a man of peaceable disposition soon gave up the practice of making it. In our daily environment, it appeared, there actually existed a variety of fellow-creature who habitually demanded more room than he had paid for, or than the mere fact of his earthly existence could demonstrate him to deserve. What made his aspect grotesque, meanwhile, was the fact that between his widely parted knees you could generally discern a tin dinner-pail. In other words, if you began to look for a flesh-and-blood personage who should gruffly exemplify in daily life the phenomenon apparently monstrous in daily caricature—the insistence on forcibly seizing more room than he had any right to—you might find him regularly, at five or

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six o'clock, by hailing any electric car which happened to be taken at the same time by honest labouring men, on their way home from work.

So far, all was innocent enough. It was a good while before these sturdy, seated personages, compelling other folks to stand up while they occupied two seats at once, impressed me in any other light than half-annoying and half-comical—the comical phase of the matter, of course, lying in the fact that this pretension to physical privilege was regularly made by people whom nobody had ever dreamt of as privileged. One day, however, I happened to sketch the line of thought we have been following, in casual talk with certain friends whose sympathies are supposed—by themselves at all events—to be more advanced than mine. It had not occurred to me that they

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would take what I said as anything but whimsical—mildly, unimportantly diverting. Much to my surprise, they took it seriously. The workingman, they informed me, had as good a right to existence as I or as anyone else—a proposition which I should be the last to deny or to question. His day's work tired him, they went on; why was he not entitled to what little comfort the spreading of his legs at right angles in a street car might give him? He was, one naturally answered, unless the room required by the posture were needed by fellow passengers who, after their own day's work—of other kind than his, perhaps, but not necessarily more exhilarating—were probably as tired as he. All they demanded was fair play—rights precisely equal with his.

Offhand, this demand does not seem excessive. To sundry philanthropic

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friends of mine, on the other hand, it has more than once presented itself as unsympathetic, aggressive, and graspingly selfish. In other words, I have reluctantly begun to feel, a workingman who claims for himself in a street car more room than he will grant a fellow passenger, is really, however little he thinks so, a privileged individual. Nobody, I fear, can deny that a good deal of highly respectable public opinion allows him—unresisted, and sympathetically approved—to do sundry aggressive things which, if done by anyone else, that same public opinion would heartily condemn. At least there is one daily aspect in which, for all his external dissimilarity, he uncomfortably resembles the plutocrats of American caricature, and the aristocrats—lay and clerical—of traditional pre-revolutionary France.

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Such a consideration can hardly help setting your man of letters to wondering whether an honest labourer resembles these true or imaginary privileged classes in any other ways. The suggestion that he can fairly be described as privileged, must doubtless seem preposterous. He is the free fellow-citizen of us all, and as such he is entitled to just the degree of respect due to anybody else, neither more nor less. His vote is exactly as good as yours or mine, neither worse nor better. No one would dream of questioning these commonplaces—none the less vital because they are so superbly at the base of our American national convictions. But the very fact that he is described—that he describes himself, indeed,—as a workingman or a labourer, implies that there are certain differences which distinguish him from people of other eco-

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nomie or social classes. Of these differences two seem fairly obvious: circumstances have prevented him, as a rule, from acquiring enough property to be an object of direct taxation; and the same circumstances or analogous ones have made him, as a type, more numerous than his equal fellow-citizens, who, so far as economic success goes, have chanced to be more fortunate. Simple as these statements seem, they involve at least one rather important consequence. Your workingman, by reason of the circumstances which distinguish him from other people, is in a position where he can exercise a good deal of control over the proceeds of property not his own. It is quite within the facts to remind ourselves that there are American cities where the voters outnumber the direct taxpayers in a proportion of five to one; and that,

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at the same time, we have not a single city where the levying and the expenditure of taxation does not rest, in ultimate analysis, on a majority vote. Increased taxes, no doubt, fall indirectly on all citizens; if a landlord's tax be raised, he must raise his rents or face his creditors. Such remote considerations, however, are beyond the horizon of most tenants, who denounce every increase of rent as a new manifestation of grasping monopoly. We have riots about such incidents now and then; and if any municipality should try to cure the trouble by putting ever so small a direct tax on workingmen we should have worse ones. Your American voter's belief that the control of public moneys should lie with him is doubtless wholesome; whether his indifference to the duty of contributing his due proportion of these public moneys

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be equally so, we need not at present inquire. That it exists, we cannot deny. Nor can we deny that, in the course of the last century or so, one great maxim of the American Revolution seems to have got queerly turned round. Our forefathers protested against taxation without representation; our fellow-citizens now demand, as their natural right, something very like representation without taxation.

This looks uncommonly like a phase of old-fashioned privilege. What is more, it brings us straight to something very like another. Whoever has had patience to follow these considerations can hardly avoid assent to a proposition which may very likely have suggested itself already. There was no need that the writer of such opinions should have taken the trouble to protest himself nothing but a man of letters. You may

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insist, if you will, that he is a free citizen of a free country. You must admit at the same time that he has expressed views which would preclude the possibility of his ever taking part in its free public life, or even of much influencing its acknowledged public opinion. It is far from my intention, at this moment, to make any criticism on the public utterances of others, more immediately serviceable to the republic than any mere man of letters can ever be. No one could be further than I from doubting the fundamental honesty of our true public men. No one could imagine such considerations as have here arisen in my mind to be completely comprehensive of our present political and social condition. No one can honestly question the sincerity with which our national leaders protest their faith in American democracy and in the Amer-

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ican people. And yet, I believe, no one can deny that such protestations are as crucial as open professions of creed ever were when differences of religion have waxed high. For a public man to hesitate in making them would bring his period of public usefulness to an abrupt end. To millions of our voters, the sort of thing which I have already permitted myself to say would unquestionably present itself almost exactly as refusal to sacrifice to the image of Cæsar presented itself to loyal Romans of the empire, as refusal to bow at the mention of the name of the Mikado is said to have presented itself in old Japan, as neglect to rise and bare your head when the band plays "God Save the King" presents itself to British subjects gathered together, or as *lèse majesté* presents itself to German magistrates under the Emperor William. Who-

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ever your sovereign be—one, or few, or many—he demands for his favour, just as he has demanded throughout history, the tribute of formal and if so may be, of willing and sincere homage. Homage is his privilege, and to preserve privilege you must jealously guard it. So your American voter, typified for the moment by your honest workingman, taking two seats in a public conveyance where he has paid for only one, requires as the first condition of his suffrage uncritical—and happily sincere—protestation of loyalty to him. Whoever fails to make it commits the indiscreet, unpardonable sin of failure to acknowledge a privilege which, in many aspects, must remain dominant.

The sin once committed, however, one has the consolation of freedom from dread. One may go on to ask something further concerning the character-

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istics manifested by this sovereign kind of people, whose vote controls the vote of others by overwhelming majority, who are exempt by the fortune of lack of fortune from all the discomfort of direct taxation, and who demand for the reward of their smiles the protestation of unhesitating and enthusiastic loyalty. The phases of privilege thus in their enjoyment are so far from evil as not even to be objectionable; they do not needfully involve either of the two most deplorable characteristics perceptible in the old-world privilege of pre-Revolutionary days—indifference to duty, and selfish tyranny. The old privileged classes, we have agreed, were cynically extravagant with public property, particularly when they had the good fortune to be in public employ. They combined together to keep up excessive prices, and to prevent

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competition with themselves. They were careless, throughout, of the quality of their work, and of its quantity. And when their sloth, or their luxury, or their extravagance compelled, for their support, increased demand on the sources of public income, they were careful that the added weight of taxation should fall on others than their privileged selves. One might go on indefinitely, defining the portentous traditional image of privilege in the olden time. The real question is whether the privilege of these later times is beginning to display any similar characteristics.

Take the question of public moneys. An every-day example will here serve our purpose better than generalization; and the pavement of a street is as good an example as any. I have one in mind, made almost under my eyes not

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long ago, and on the whole well made. It involved the ploughing up of an old pavement, the rolling of stone and gravel into the new surface, and the incidental handling of this material, brought in carts, and mostly spread with shovels. Just how long it ought to have taken I do not know, for want of expert knowledge. Just how long it took I do not remember; but a single block was a matter of from two to three weeks. One thing is certain. Neither the plough nor the steam-roller was actually at work during anything like half the time when it was supposed to be; and, day after day, the periods of inaction were devoted by the men in charge of these engines to friendly conversation. With the men whose duty was shovelling, the case was the same. There were at least twice as many of them as there was any need of; and,

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although I glanced at them at intervals throughout their labours, from a window where I was at work, I never observed any one of them use a shovel twice without a good long rest between the shovel-fuls. These moments of relaxation appeared to be full of social charm. A shovel once empty, the wielder of it would rest it on the ground, and leaning on it as a staff, would exchange observations or anecdotes with his similarly unoccupied neighbour. Had one desired an image of a leisure class, as a privileged class is often called, one would have needed only a kodak at almost any moment during the whole deliberate job. These were voters of our public moneys, out of other people's pockets into their own.

If this incident had been exceptional, —except for the fact that the pavement, finally made, proved tolerably sound,

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—it would not have been worth mention. The significant phase of it is its complete commonplace. Watch public work anywhere in this country, and you will find it to the eye only faintly distinguishable from deliberate idling. Here, at least, is one aspect where the new privileged class reveals itself as subject to an insidious temptation of privilege in elder times.

In other respects something of the same kind is observable. Take, for example, the quality of the work which nowadays Americans may generally expect from people who profess to do it. Tear your trousers hereabouts, and try to get them mended in such manner as has hitherto been done almost anywhere abroad. If the mending in America can ever be made to look better than a patch your experience will be happier than most of us have had;

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yet your American tailor enjoys wages which make foreign tailors open their eyes. Again, a friend of mine possesses a travelling bag with a slightly complicated lock. A year or two ago he took it to an American city of some ten or twelve thousand inhabitants, and on his arrival discovered that he had forgotten the key. No locksmith to be found in that region could offer to open it by any less drastic means than cutting out the lock with a chisel. My friend recoiled at this suggestion, borrowed night clothes, and sent for his key by mail. A few months afterwards the same misadventure befell him, with the same bag, in a German village. A young mechanic, who picked the lock in five minutes, made a new key in half an hour or so. The wages of this ingenious craftsman, I am given to understand, were not more than a

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quarter of those of an American locksmith. One might go on indefinitely with such examples, sure to be within anyone's experience, of work worse and worse done and better and better paid for. The single point of professional skill and pride insisted on among ourselves at this moment appears to be that your workingman's wages shall be kept high. The quantity and the quality of what work he does seem equally negligible. Again, we find ourselves confronted with something uncommonly like a characteristic foible of old-world privilege.

Another follows hard on its heels. Not only among ourselves but all over our modern, democratic world, workmen combine, more and more, not only to limit the hours and the quantity of their work, but so far as possible, to exclude all competition with their asso-

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ciated selves. The question of labour unions is too extensive, too technical,—too serious, I have been warned by partisans on both sides,—for any adequate consideration by a man of letters. Yet even a man of letters has a right to express such opinions as these: So far as combinations of labour tend to improve morals in the widest sense, and to insure their members against the sufferings incident to accident or misfortune, we may cheerfully welcome them as beneficent. So far as they confuse the distinction between good work and bad, or compel a man who can lay a thousand bricks a day to stop when he has laid five hundred, they are demoralizing. So far as their threats or their violence restrain from work, which they themselves refuse to do, free fellow-citizens who are willing and able to do it, they are abominable. There comes

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to mind an instance told me not long ago by a friend who had a good many union workmen in his employ. It chanced that none among them could perform a given piece of work requiring special skill. My friend did not venture on the bold proposal that a competent non-union man might be called in. That, he knew, would involve a strike. He went so far as to suggest, however, that one of two or three union workmen, out of a job in a neighbouring city, might be sent for. He presently found that this, too, was out of the question. The introduction even of a union workman as a competitor, from a few hours' distance, would have meant a strike as well. So the sorely needed work had either to go undone or to be done badly; though meanwhile union workmen, admittedly competent to do it, were idle not a day's journey away. The work-

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men concerned in this incident are understood to repudiate the terms monopoly and privilege. By what others they could so properly describe their almost realized ideals, no one has yet pointed out.

Similar instances will occur to anybody. Of late some of them have been brought to public notice by discussions concerning the loss of efficiency, of earnings, of life, and of limb remarked in the recent history of certain railways. A competent authority has attributed this to the "intense consideration by employees of their rights, to the exclusion of their duties." Though the phrase is hardly epigrammatic, no epigram could much more clearly define one insidious aspect of class privilege.

Organized labour, too, is beginning to affect international as well as domestic politics. Its combinations

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against foreign competition, not only in America, but also, to go no further, in various parts of the British dominions, are at this moment a commonplace. Again we touch on matters far too extensive for adequate discussion here and now. Yet, as was the case before, we can fairly remind ourselves of certain more or less prevalent opinions. There can be little doubt, for one thing, that the labour question is among the chief causes which are so often assumed to be propelling the United States towards serious difficulty—or at least towards the possibility of serious difficulty—with Japan. And a few months ago there were not wanting critics of intelligence, both here and abroad, who surmised that occasion might not have arisen for despatching the American fleet through the Straits of Magellan unless local combinations of labour on the

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Pacific Slope had so conducted themselves concerning the maintenance of generally excessive wages—higher wages, I mean, than could persist against skilful competition in one limited section of any country—as to involve the cheerfully minimized danger of a war compared with which the wars of the past seem trivial; for none yet has been on a planetary scale. It needs, perhaps, the vagrant fancy of a man of letters to remember those thrilling chapters of Dumas where England and France almost come to blows because the Duke of Buckingham has collected, among other love-tokens, the ring of Anne of Austria. Privilege is protean through the centuries; but privilege stays privilege, neglectful of interests other than its own.

It turns the tables, too. Traditionally, if I remember aright some youth-

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ful studies of the law, there was an unjust rule that a servant or an employee injured in the course of his service through no fault of his own, but even by negligence or fault on the part of his employer, could not recover damages from the man who employed him. Clearly, anyone not superstitiously devoted to time-honoured legal precedent would hold this deplorable. If an employer be guilty of negligence or of fault it seems monstrous that the mere fact of his being an employer should shield him from the consequences. Here is a clear case of privilege abhorrent to all modern temper. Unless I am quite mistaken, however, the legislation of the present time is not content with the abolition of this old privilege. There is a tendency at this moment, all over the world, to set the whole thing topsy-turvy; there seems to be some-

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thing like an endeavour to establish for every employee the new privilege that, no matter how careless he may be, drunk or sober, he shall recover damages from a wholly innocent employer in whose service anything disastrous happens to him. I remember a farce on this point, played a year or two ago at the Théâtre Antoine, in Paris. A drunken fellow became so troublesome that his employer paid him in full and discharged him about half an hour before his term of employment was technically at an end. With his pocket full, he started, according to his own admission, in quest of a stout woman whom he had met on the twentieth of the preceding May. On his way he was run over by an omnibus. Thereupon he brought action against his employer for full wages, and hospital expenses, during the ensuing weeks

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when he was laid up. And in the farce the fellow won his case; and the employer was lectured by the judge for the gross inhumanity of the motives which led him to contest it, and for pettifogging technicality when in final desperation he suggested that, if his own watch was right, the vagrant victim had come to grief a minute or two after the luckless half-hour of employment had expired.

Whatever you may think of this matter,—however exaggerated that bit of satire may seem, if it do not happen to appeal to you,—there can be little question that two aspirations of modern workingmen tend queerly toward a renewal of privileges supposed to have been swept from earth by the great Revolution. Among the most obvious abuses of the elder time was the fact that a good many worthless, or

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at least inefficient, people managed to get themselves comfortably supported at public expense. Sometimes they held offices, which were often sinecures; sometimes they were unblushingly pensioned, once for all; and people who grew warm for human rights waxed hot over such palpable wrongs. After a hundred years of crescent democracy, these practices reveal themselves hardly so much in the light of wrongs as in that of specific manifestations of an enduring human tendency—weakness, I might have said, if the fashion of our philanthropic day had permitted the attribution of weakness to so divine a thing as humanity. Compulsory employment by the state, or at least by command of the state, and old age pensions are now eagerly urged on all sides. We have already reminded ourselves of the tirade of Figaro. The

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very words of it would apply to the Elysian existence into which the workman would enter, should these aspirations of his come to pass. To enjoy comfort, no matter whether he work well or ill, and to enjoy the luxury of untrammelled leisure in his later years he need do only one very simple thing, namely, give himself the trouble to be born.

All these tendencies, which none of us can deny, whether they command our approval or excite our dread, are among the causes at present involving the whole world in increased public expense. To meet increased public expense there must be found increased public revenue. On general principles you would suppose that this increasing burden ought to be borne proportionately by all members of society, all of whom should thus be made to feel,

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each in his degree, the monitory truth that things as they are begin to cost considerably more than things as they used to be. Whether there be any good sense in these general principles I am not prepared to dispute. What seems certainly the case is that a completely contrary assumption at present underlies a good deal of legislation, and innumerable public utterances, all over the civilized world. The inherent justice and wisdom of what is called progressive taxation are asserted, right and left, almost as commonplaces. In plain words, this means, for example, that if you inherit a thousand dollars, or enjoy an income of that amount, you need pay no direct tax at all; that if your income or your inheritance amount to ten thousand dollars, you must pay a tax of five hundred; that an inheritance or an income

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of a hundred thousand dollars shall subject you to a tax of ten thousand; and so on, until we get to confiscation. These figures, of course, are purely hypothetical. They illustrate the principle, I believe, with complete fairness; and the principle means that the poorer you are the less you need feel the weight of any public burden. If you are poor enough, you need not feel it at all. If this be not class privilege, I for one have no conception of what class privilege ever was or ever can be.

The term, no doubt, stays odious. It proved particularly objectionable, I am told, to a youth with whom a friend of mine happened, not long ago, to be discussing this phase of our question. The young man, who appeared to be temperamentally something of a reformer, was candid enough to admit that, ideally, the burden of taxation

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ought to be distributed equally; but he could see little reason for dwelling on the fact that the most equal distribution of the burden is a proportionate one—a dollar for a hundred dollars, for example, and a thousand dollars for a hundred thousand. The whole question, he presently opined, is ideal—as no doubt it is. In point of sad fact, somebody so far has had to bear more than his share of the unwelcome load. Very good; in that case, the philanthropic young disputant held, the proper people to bear it are the possessors of what have sometimes been described as “swollen fortunes.” Convenient though the vagueness of this indefinite term may be, it hardly clears the air of animated discussion. So a precise question presently arose, as to how large, or rather how small, a fortune might fairly be regarded as swollen to a point

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where it ought equitably to become an exceptional object of direct taxation. On this point, the youth's opinion seemed decided: a fortune began to look plethoric when its possessor enjoyed an income of more than five thousand dollars a year. Five thousand a year, he added, ought to be kept free from taxation. Just why this limit seemed to him so final my friend ventured to inquire. The reason was clear: his father, he said, had worked hard all his life; he had got somewhere near five thousand a year at last, and it would be monstrous to deprive such a man of the small luxuries which he could now afford from his honest earnings—even to the last penny thereof.

We have lingered long enough over these various commonplaces of our contemporary democracy. The one thing about them which may perhaps

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be held not commonplace is that you can hardly feel them to present themselves, in the light of common-sense, as inspiring examples of the spirit of fair play. There is certainly an aspect in which they look rather like renewed assertion of a principle which we conventionally suppose obsolete—the principle of deliberately demanded privilege. The chief difference of this new form of privilege from the old lies in the fact that the old privilege was established in favour of the upper classes, and that the new privilege is establishing itself in favour of the lower.

These terms—upper classes and lower—are doubtless invidious. Invidious or not, they are the best we have for a fact invariable throughout civilized history. At any given moment, anywhere, you will find certain classes of people, just as you will find

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certain individuals, who have outstripped others in the unending, inevitable struggle for existence. Language must describe conditions like this; otherwise humanity could not reason. And not only our own English but every other language of which I have cognizance has chosen conventionally to describe the difference of classes in any society by a faded metaphor of stratification. Those who have succeeded, on the whole, in the struggle, or the race, for social prosperity, it has called the upper classes, to distinguish them from the lower classes, whom they have outstripped. Everywhere and always they have been objects of envy, and of envy by no means all unwarrantable. For, once assured of even momentary dominance, they have everywhere attempted to protect and to perpetuate themselves by all manner of artificial de-

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vices. Artifice, however, can never supplant nature. Able men from the lower classes have everywhere incessantly risen to the upper. Feeble folk in the upper classes have constantly sunk towards the lower. Juggle with humanity as you will, you can never prevent its division into the many and the few. One is not irreverent who begins to recognize in the contrast a law of God.

Face to face with this tremendous truth, we can hardly help asking what qualities, on the whole, seem through the centuries to have distinguished these groups from one another. Both are consummately human—which means that both have virtues and both faults, singularly similar in a thousand ways. What is more, the faults of the upper classes, partly by reason of their very emergence, are often more con-

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spicuous than their virtues; and the virtues of the lower classes, partly by reason of their submergence, often seem more instantly salient than their faults. The bottom of things above you is what meets the eye, whoever or wherever you are, and the top of things below. The question now before us, however, is not one of abstract virtue or vice; it is rather a plain matter of fact. Why do some people rise? Why do others fall? Why do some emerge? Why are others submerged beneath the surface of the whirling stream of life until their very names are forgotten, which once were known?

To dwell here on actual instances of prosperity or of failure might be unseemly. After all, it is better to generalize—to bid each of us recall the literal stories for himself. In our own country, throughout all living memory,

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the openness of careers to talent has been almost the widest in human history. Tell yourselves that which you yourselves do know of families and of men who have risen or have fallen in the course of the nineteenth century. If you tell yourselves the stories unflinchingly, I believe, nothing can gleam much more clearly than the truth that the qualities of those who have risen, surpassing their faults, are intelligence, industry, ability, character; and that the qualities of those who have sunk, overwhelming their virtues, are rather stupidity, sloth, inefficiency and weakness. Sobriety and drunkenness may imply the story in two words; or licentiousness and continence; or frugality and extravagance; or diligence and laziness or at best alertness and dulness. Perhaps the two words of all which imply it most comprehen-

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sively are responsibility and irresponsibility. We have ventured to suppose that the law of which we are trying to give ourselves account is a law of God. Whether it be or no, we cannot candidly hold it inequitable.

If this be true, and if it be true at the same time that, having rid the world of avowed privilege in favour of the responsible, we are unwittingly shackling it again with unperceived privilege in favour of the irresponsible,

“New presbyter is but old priest writ large.”

What is before us no mere man of letters may confidently prophesy, or clearly foresee. It may, indeed, be Utopia, close at hand beyond the mists. It may be a new barbarism, darker than that in which the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome passed

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away from the sunshine for a thousand years. Only one thing seems sure. It will not be the generous persistence of that noble phase of democracy which throughout the first century of our national existence has been the inspiring glory of our American United States. For among ourselves, hitherto, all privilege—be it for the high or be it for the lowly—has been held equally hateful. We have striven, perhaps in vain, to maintain a country where men shall be free to win not their aspirations, but their deserts.

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TO maintain a country, a society, a nation where, so far as earthly conditions may permit, all men shall be free to win what they deserve—that seems a fair statement of our deepest American ideal. Life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness we hold not as privileges, but as rights—as ends towards which no human being may justly be prevented from pressing with all the energy he can command. In perfection, they are doubtless unattainable. Life, at least in this state of being, has its inexorable limits, the tragic certainty of which has led countless millions through the ages

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to consolatory faith in an unseen world where renewed life shall persist unending. It is partly, perhaps, recognition of this superhuman aspiration of mankind, and of the truth that, however earnest men may be, they can never all agree in matters of religion, which has made the principle of religious freedom so dear to the hearts of true Americans. The right to life, as it were, implies the right to uncontrolled faith in the life which is eternal; the right to liberty implies freedom to conceive this life to come in whatever guise may seem most nearly true; the right to the pursuit of happiness implies that each of us may seek for spiritual comfort in this most profound and enduring of its phases, as suits him best. No one would pretend, to be sure, that America has been innocent of religious dispute. Yet there seems, on the whole,

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no region of recorded history where religious dispute has been suffered to interfere less with freedom of conscience than is the case among ourselves to-day. At bottom—orthodox or infidel—we believe that the truth has such inherent strength, such divine vitality that it must finally win its deserts when it has the happiness to seek them in a country like ours.

This matter of our religious freedom is perhaps as characteristic of our national temper as any which could be called to mind. None, I think, could more fully imply our confidence that desert should have its due. We commonly grant to religious societies, no doubt, certain exemptions from the full burden of taxation; but we equally grant such exemptions to educational societies and to charitable. We respect all earnest effort to improve the body,

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the mind or the soul. Any special privilege to any given faith, on the other hand,—even though that faith chance to be one's own,—is abhorrent to our generous national convictions. Let each creed—like each man—have its deserts. In these, and only in these, we will protect it. And in these we have come to protect creeds and men, and all the other creatures of our complicated social and economic life, by means of the political system at present tending to dominance throughout the world,—the government of the people, by the people, for the people. No American can fail to feel the eloquence of those simple words wherein Lincoln enshrined the ideal of American democracy.

His emphasis, beyond dispute, was on the people; but not on the people in any blind and volatile omnipotence of

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multiplex tyranny. There are moments, indeed, when the stress of his meaning might better be laid not on the people, but on what the people may be trusted to sustain—on government. Without government of some efficient kind, no society can persist. For, unless the history of the human race, from the beginning to this day, be altogether delusive, prosperity and righteousness, life itself and liberty and the pursuit of happiness, can be preserved here below only under governments which keep secure the two great bases of civilization—public order and private property.

Government, then, by jealous yet submissive consent of the people who, in their full extent of varied being, high and low, are at once the governors and the governed, is the true political ideal of America. Despite the errors and the

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infirmities of the men through whose mortal hands such government must be changingly and fleetingly administered, it may be trusted, we believe, to work for the good of the whole people, strong and weak, wise and foolish, rich and poor. Democracy, as we conceive it, is not a rabble, enviously destructive of all but its own vilest phase; nor is it a little body of superiors imposing their beneficent will on those beneath them. In its all-embracing entirety it generously comprises all alike—all consciously the happier for the inestimable variety of character, of condition, of powers which must consent in the superb unity of its comprehensive life. Far from actual realization as ideals must always be, this earnestly cherished aspiration of American democracy has thus far stayed unbroken and consistent. If you doubt, ask any American

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to tell you, not what our people have done, but what at heart, in those better moments which most deeply disclose the hidden secrets of the spirit, our people have believed, and have tried to be.

He will perhaps tell you at the same time that all this came into existence with the government which, after its full century of accumulating national vigour, has unwittingly grown during the past generation into a power so considerable that it must reluctantly concern itself with the larger politics of the world. Nations, like religions, come swiftly to have their legends; and this blameless legend of our popular eloquence and our public schools has long been a matter of unquestioning American faith. In common with legends more airy, if not less inspiring, it has the misfortune that it cannot withstand,

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at least in literal integrity, the higher criticism even of the most orthodox. If you are heartless enough to turn on it the clear, white light of authentic record, its beauty fades, or glows, into that of a pious tale. For what we call the American Revolution, declaring our independence in 1776, and establishing our Constitution in 1788, made no radical change in the life or in the temper of the previously unrecognized nation which it finally brought into political being. It hardly changed the form of government or of other law to which that nation, inevitably rather than deliberately democratic, had long submitted. It merely proclaimed to a somewhat surprised world, wherein Americans themselves were apparently the most surprised of all, that a century and a half of juvenile colonial growth had brought us to an adoles-

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cence no longer amenable to the discipline of parental control. It destroyed nothing but the formal ties which had hitherto bound us to the Mother Country. Its ultimate work was hardly destructive at all; it preserved, rather, it sustained and it strengthened the character, the ideals, the rights, the aspirations of a nation which the tremendous course of history has already made, the oldest in the world.

For not only are the roots of our national life buried deep in the soil of Seventeenth Century England, but since the War of our Independence brought that national life into final being, every single country in Europe has undergone political and social change far more radical than any which has yet come to ours. In 1789, when Washington became the first of the presidents who have successively and consti-

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tutionally embodied our popular sovereignty to the present day, George III was still long to be King of an unreformed England, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were still on the throne of pre-Revolutionary France, and the family of Buonaparte were only respectable gentlefolk of Corsica. These very names must call to mind the general course of ensuing history. Since the American Revolution,—as we have always named our War of Independence,—finally revealed the ripeness of our national institutions, and brought into enduring existence the single ancestral democracy of modern times, the whole European world has undergone repeated experience of internal revolution, constitutional so far as forms go in England, elsewhere violent in manifestation, and everywhere profoundly modifying both social structure and political

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ideals. In protean forms, no doubt, the nations of Europe, one and all, are centuries older than we. In actual constitution, just as in the flag which excites our exuberantly demonstrative loyalty, we have altered so little while they have changed so much that it is they who unperceived have become the new, and we the old.

True revolution, in fact, has shaken them all. What this means we all instinctively know. To state it, the while, in general terms, is troublesome. A century of intermittent revolution, hardly yet conclusively accomplished anywhere, has made the word, like the fact it stands for, terribly disturbing. There are thousands of good people to whom the slightest suggestion of Revolution sounds diabolical. There are other thousands, and probably far more, to whom it implies the passion-

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ate rising of humanity towards something nearer the height of divinity. There are few—only hundreds, one might almost say, in comparison,—whom it leaves indifferent. And here we are trying to speak for all. Yet one and all—revolutionist, reactionary or indifferent—may, perhaps, agree to some such statement as this of what, at heart, Revolution has been: Wherever it has occurred, the course of social and political history has slowly managed to develop certain palpable kinds of privilege. Generally sanctioned in its origin by what approach to public opinion may then have existed, this privilege has gradually come to seem oppressive, repressive of opportunity, heartless, monstrous, wrong. In the minds of Revolutionists established custom is honestly held as nothing in comparison with abstract rights. So when,

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for any cause,—social, political or economic,—the moment comes when Revolutionists can act, they surge forward, with contagiously sincere moral fervour, and ruthlessly attack the out-worn privilege which has impeded the course of what they deem human progress. Their motive is always philanthropic, their intention generally constructive. To construct on old ground, however, you must first destroy; to benefit mankind you must first enfranchise them. Revolutionists are never unresisted, nor is the resistance ever without a reactionary moral fervour of its own, as genuine as theirs, even though less contagious. The conflict is not only a conflict of interests, it is a conflict of faiths. All men admit, in sober moments, that human life must have its evils; but some believe that every evil which shows its head must be attacked, and others be-

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lieve, on the contrary, that, bad as things are, the world might rather be worse than better. So passion runs high. Neither party does justice to the higher purposes of the other. One thing is pretty sure to occur. Privilege comes to grief, sometimes finally, sometimes only for a while. If, in such event, the older forms of privilege can in any way manage to revive, they are merciless, when even momentarily reëstablished, to anybody who has threatened them. If Revolution prevail, traditional privilege fares even worse than defeated Revolutionists; for, like other militant professors of charity, Revolution is seldom conspicuous for mercy to opponents. Its purpose remains throughout to establish new and more nearly equal human rights. Its actual work seems often to be rather the unintentional establishment of new and un-

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tested privilege. Here lies its most insidious danger.

Vaguely though this be stated, it is probably enough to remind us of two facts in our American history. The first is that the American Revolution can come within any such general conception of revolution only when we limit our view to its political aspect. It finally separated us from the British sovereignty which we had grown to feel alien. It permanently disrupted what had previously been the united British Empire. Among ourselves, however, it had no deeply revolutionary results. Society and law, public order and private property were not profoundly or lastingly disturbed. Rip Van Winkle, on waking, found himself, no doubt, in a new world, but not in a world unrecognizably changed from that whence he had strayed to his enchanted sleep.

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Though the quiet Dutch inn was replaced by a wooden barrack and the sign of red-coated King George had changed into that of blue and buff General Washington, the rubicund visage was unaltered. American citizens enjoyed much the same rights and securities which had blessed them when British subjects,—and they had invented hardly any new ones.

The second fact in our history which our reflections on revolution may well call to mind is one which, at least in our Northern regions, we are not habitually given to regarding as precisely revolutionary at all. Yet after a little calm consideration, we may very seriously begin to doubt whether any social revolution has ever wrought more tremendous changes than those brought about in our Southern States by the Civil War. In 1860, throughout these states, there

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was an established condition of society and of property, on the whole agreeable to most residents enjoying the rights of citizenship and of ownership, but elsewhere believed less welcome to their slaves, who enjoyed neither. The causes of the Civil War and the details of its history are beyond our present scope. There can be little question that it was something widely different from the philanthropic crusade into which so much Northern tradition has already transfigured it. North and South alike, indeed, would to-day agree that its fundamental purpose was to settle the question finally answered by its result—the question of the maintenance and preservation of that national Union whose full-grown strength has now brought our nationality face to face with empire. Yet, at the same time, North and South would equally agree

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that without the fervour which burned high, on the one hand, for the rights of man, black or white, and on the other, for the rights of local sovereignty and the maintenance of its established institutions, the Civil War could never have broken out quite as was the case. There were four years of brave contest. In the course of them, as a war measure analogous to the confiscation of an enemy's property, President Lincoln proclaimed the slaves free. And when, at last, the armed force of the South was exhausted, the whole structure of Southern society was in ruins.

Revolution or not, no revolution has ever wrought more havoc than existed and ensued there. The old political rights, for one thing, believed by the popular opinion of the victors to have been no better than privileges, were swept away. Political rights were

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presently thrust upon the negroes, who had neither enjoyed them before nor had the slightest training for the serious duties of American citizenship. The whole new condition of labour, too, was untested, by employer and by employed alike. The most characteristic, if not the most important, form of property had meanwhile been stricken out of existence. The slaves, immemorially objects of purchase and sale, and wholly inexperienced in responsibility, not only became the political equals of their former masters, with full freedom of contract, but often found themselves in a majority which placed under their control the practical conduct of all public affairs. One might go on indefinitely and indisputably. The wonder would grow that less than fifty years have made this appalling confusion a matter of the past, already discussed,

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on both sides, in the critical spirit of science and of history. If this were not revolution, one might suppose, revolution can never occur.

This great political and social convulsion was perhaps needful, and surely in the end it has been more than justified, even for the sufferers, by the national integrity which it has finally brought about. Now that it has passed into history, on the other hand, the horrors of it and the hardships, even for the party who prevailed, have a poignancy which should give us pause. If this were called the American Revolution, the chastened spirit of America could hardly cherish the conception of Revolution as of something all glorious—to be eagerly prophesied, to be longed for, to be urged on. Grant that revolution be needful; it is not for that the less awful, the less terrible. Even

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though a necessity, it is a necessity to be faced not with enthusiasm and rejoicing, but rather with fasting and prayer. And that fasting and prayer, on both sides, consecrated again and again the life and death struggle of American Union is among the deepest reasons why all Americans may join in holding the memory of that struggle noble.

When, in moods like this, we thus begin to ponder on the American Revolution, which wrought so little internal havoc, and on the Civil War, which, in one great portion of our country, wrought so much, we may well come to the surprising conclusion that the two conflicts have somehow got misleadingly, bewilderingly misnamed. They were both revolutions, if you will; whether you will or no, they were both civil wars; and that which we call our Civil War seems, in many aspects, the

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more profoundly revolutionary of the two. A little further reflection, however, leads one to feel that our name for it is fundamentally true, and that our popular error, if error it be, in deeming our first great conflict to have been revolutionary and our second to have been something different, springs rather from the fact that our unimpeded American and English usage has always described our first civil war as the American Revolution, pure and simple. In each case, a passionate and inevitable civil war was not pervasive of the empire which it tore, or threatened to tear, asunder. In the American Revolution, Great Britain was arrayed against her transatlantic colonies. In the American Civil War, North was arrayed against South, the slave states against the states where labour was free. In both cases, the contest was real-

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ly sectional; in neither internal. Compare them both with the great European revolution—the French—and you will instantly feel the deep difference. To be completely revolutionary, in the full sense of the term, a conflict must be something more, and more appalling, than a conflict between sections of any country. Sectional conflict has innumerable features which remind us rather of conflicts plainly international. The American Revolution—civil war though it were—seems in perspective very like the determined repulse of an invasion; the Civil War—revolution though it wrought—seems very like a bravely resisted military conquest. The sadness and the heroism of each alike were not so much those of revolution as of more generalized warfare, between kinsfolk who prayed and disputed in their common language. From true

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revolution, from a pervasive national disorder originating and raging within itself—from such ordeal as the end of the eighteenth century brought to France and as the course of the nineteenth century had kept recurrent throughout Europe,—America has hitherto been spared. It is no play with words to assure ourselves, as solemnly as we may, that the decisive American revolution—the convulsion which should change us from the eldest of extant nations to the newest, from the ancestral home of constitutional democracy to some nursery of newly devised privilege,—is still to come, if come it must. And whoever believes that it must come, or longs that it shall, proves himself something else than a traditional American.

He is not traditionally American, at least, in loyalty to what America has

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been and has accomplished—in faith that our past has proved itself worthy to be the monitor of our future. No past was ever so admirable that one could wish to revive it or to prolong it changeless. No future ever stretched before human vision without mirage of unexplored regions, wherein humanity might find opportunity denied it while still confined within its tested limits. One who should recoil towards the past for fear of what the future may unfold, would lack the buoyant courage which we believe to have marked the spirit of our country. But one who should utterly disdain the past because in the past there have been evils,—one who should dream that the future can ever comprise all of the better history of mankind,—would be still less faithful to our American ideals. For although our elder utterances have often sounded

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disdainful of things which have been, giving welcome only to things which are to be, the persistent conduct of our country has been characterized by a wisdom, a prudence, a steadfast good-sense long since believed historically to have justified our national faith in such democracy as ours. And your revolutionist, denying the truth of that faith,—at least in every guise as yet assumed thereby, unless it be the guise of hasty and unthinking utterance,—would have us believe that the history of our United States, like the histories of those elder nations who have thriven for a while, and crashed at last into ruin, is already no better than a nightmare from which it is time to waken.

It is time for us, the while, you may well feel, to come down from these clouds of generalization. After all, you may long have been asking, what

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precise facts of the past, and what probable dangers of the future, are we actually bringing to mind? Such considerations as ours have at once the charm, for those who feel it, and the danger, perceptible to sympathetic tempers and to dubious alike, of straying into elusive swirls of thin verbiage. What is more, when we attempt to make them more definite, we are met by the double difficulty that the past is bewildering in its complexity and the future illimitable in its uncertainty. A typical example of what has been and of what may be—a selection from the past, a conjectural prophecy of a conceivable future—will help us to remind ourselves of just what we are trying to lay hold of. We cannot specify everything. That is no reason why we should flutter interminably above the level of solid earth.

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A little while ago we reminded ourselves that, unless the persistent admonition of history be mere chatter, the state of human society called civilization—a state assumed to be, on the whole, happier than those from which it is distinguished—can exist only when two substantial foundations of it are secure. These are public order and private property. The first is clearly essential to the second. Human nature, whatever its conceivable excellences, has never yet revealed itself in so nearly divine a condition that it may confidently be trusted to behave decently when uncontrolled. The traditional fancies of natural warfare and of social compact, I dare say, have no basis in recorded fact or in fact ascertained by the scrutiny of science. All the same they possess—in common with outworn theologies and cosmologies—the virtue

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of leading us to perceive truths not quite evident without them. The salutary truths here in question are that orderly government is essential to the existence of civilized society, and that civilized society is what has hitherto distinguished men from brutes. Imagine, if you can, a world without police, or without highways for them to police. If you be not beguiled by some fairy fancy of anarchy, you will find it, in any approach to terms of conceivable reality, a world where you would never dare venture out of doors—except for the incidental fact that it might probably contain few doors behind which you could regularly find protection. The means of securing public order have been widely various. To venturesome spirits, the best of them must sometimes seem irksome. What has distinguished ours of America from most which have

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prevailed elsewhere, and in former times has been the candour of its admission that its true basis is common consent. This is democracy in its public aspect.

Public order once reasonably secure, private property is bound to follow. That it involves hardships and evils no one need deny. That, on the whole, it appeals to the normal instincts of human nature is even less contestable. Let a man who amounts to anything alone, in a region where he can feel reasonably safe, and he will set himself to work, thereby earning in his own opinion—and in the opinion which has underlain healthy legislation throughout the past—various rights superior to those of people who, not amounting to much, have preferred to remain idle. The more skilful he is, or the more able, the more he will earn. Ability and skill, too, will tend to bring him

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into a position of command over other people, less happily endowed by nature than he or less energetic, or less industrious, or for any other reason of less consequence. As society grows more civilized, and incidentally affairs become more complicated, the faculty of direction, of control, of command will turn out to have increasingly vital importance and will thus come to earn rewards more considerable than those bestowed on other faculties, however respectable or remarkable, which are either more frequent or less necessary. Incidentally, as a matter of course,—for human beings are leaky vessels,—the process which we have been considering so simply will be rather perplexingly complicated by the persistent intrusion of knavery in various forms. It is possible that you might collect many thousands of men without en-

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meshing a single saint; you would be at pains to find a dozen anywhere untainted by symptoms of human weakness—or, to put the case less reticently, without lighting on some sorry rascal. But, despite all your prosperous knaves, the conduct of human affairs, by and large, must be honest. If it were not, no double entries in bookkeeping would ever quite balance; and if books did not balance, as a rule, everything would be nowhere, when we come to business. Hitherto, on the whole, property and the rights which go with it have proved worth while. Speaking generally, they have tended to put men in possession of just about what their variously diverse powers prove them to deserve. When we touched, not long ago, on the necessity of public order, we tried to imagine what a condition of public anarchy would really

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be like. Try now to imagine what the world would be like if some occasional dreams of socialism should come true; and see whether you can conceive it much otherwise than as a place where—if anything of civilized value should persist—people would find themselves entitled, by the mere fact of existence, to all manner of things which they have neither the muscle nor the wit to earn by honest work. Socialistic fancies now and again glow with dreamily philanthropic beauty; but they can never have much in common with our uncompromising and robust old-fashioned insistence that everybody has a right to earn what he can.

Now hitherto American democracy has proved itself servant of civilization not only by its maintenance of public order, but also by its sturdy determination that, so far as may be on earth, you

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and I and all of us, high or low, shall be protected in at least two rights of private property—the right peacefully to possess what we may be able to acquire and the right freely to dispose of it. No one would pretend that the efforts of our democracy to maintain these rights have been flawless as a matter either of intelligence or of efficiency; not a few wise and good men would point out various aspects in which these efforts seem at best blundering, and sometimes hypocritically mischievous. Hardly anyone, the while, at least of those who have been nurtured in our ancestral American traditions, would deny that America has hitherto believed these rights to stand high among the things which ought to be. And no one, I think, can question that the right to possess property is never complete unless the possessor enjoy full

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freedom of contract, and that the right to dispose of property is never complete unless he enjoy full freedom of gift.

At least in this country, it is precisely these two phases of freedom which, on the whole, have led to such disturbances of equilibrium as happen, at this moment, to be feverishly in the public mind. Freedom of contract must evidently allow people to make as many agreements, and agreements as extensive as may lie within their imagination, their power, or their daring. The most imaginative men, the most able and the most courageous—better still, those in whom the qualities in question are most nearly fused, and whom our popular usage describes as the most enterprising—will make more agreements concerning vitally important affairs than men less happily endowed. Many

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of them will incidentally come to grief. Enough of them, however, will luckily or skilfully avoid it, to make a pretty clearly marked class of the rich, as distinguished not only from the poor, but from the vast class of respectable people who manage to make both ends meet without overlapping. Wealth unquestionably brings its temptations, and its manifold other forms of insidiously tolerable evil. Whether these are more objectionable than the vices characteristic of classes not wealthy or not, these classes will always tend to regard them as so. All the ensuing denunciation of wealth, however, can hardly hide from common-sense the truth that it results, on the whole, from lines of conduct held praiseworthy even by its enemies, and that to legislate against it without ominous danger to that freedom of contract on which all

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personal independence is based—and most chance, for that matter, of earning the full value of your work wherever you are situated,—seems beyond human ingenuity. For such benevolently socialistic legislation virtually commands healthy people to conduct their lives as if they were chronic invalids.

Freedom of gift, the while, leads to a disturbance of equilibrium rather more exasperating to those who feel themselves aggrieved by its results. Abstractly, so far as we can see, no one would object to it. Let anything be in your legal possession, from a toy to a fortune, and common consent would agree that you have a complete right to give it or any part of it to whomever you may choose thus to gladden. The ragged child who treats his friend to a bite from his single warm apple exercises the same benevolent and generous

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right which permits people in less limited circumstances to build museums, or to endow universities. This right begins as soon as you possess anything whatever; it lasts as long as you are free from jail, the madhouse, or the grave. And within limits which have generally been very wide, you are at liberty to exercise it under any conditions agreeable to your principles or your whims at the moment when it is exercised.

As a matter of fact, the while, natural affections are still so frequent, even amid the most complex distractions of civilized society, that people are apt to give most freely to those who are their nearest and their dearest—if possible, to those who are both. Generally speaking, these are obviously their wives, their children and other members of their families. As a matter of fact,

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meanwhile, wives and children must habitually present themselves to affectionate or anxious husbands and fathers as lovable beings in need of protection; a normal husband and father, furthermore, like anybody else who has come to enjoy full possession of property, is usually of opinion that it stays safer in his own hands than it would be anywhere else. From some such considerations as these has arisen not, to be sure, the literal history of testamentary law, but the general state of mind which makes so many people keep control of their property to the end of their lives, and then dispose of it by wills as elaborately conditioned as legal advice can make them. If you have a right to give anything away, you obviously have the right to do so at any moment you may prefer. If you are not superior to ordinary human considerations, you are

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usually disposed to prefer the moment of your decease, which brings your personal need of the object in question to an unquestionable end. If you have the right to impose conditions on a gift at any time, there seems no valid objection to your imposing them at this melancholy moment as specifically as would have been the case earlier.

One somewhat disconcerting result of this general line of conduct, however, long remarked in other countries than ours, is getting rather inconveniently evident in the older parts even of the United States, where fortune has tended to concentrate itself in comparatively few hands. The mere fact of wealth, even while it is still controlled by men who have proved able to accumulate and to manage it vigourously, we have seen to be exasperating to the tempers of people who find their means incon-

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veniently limited. More exasperating still, in an insidiously subtle way, is the possession, through gift, of wealth by people who have neither earned it, nor displayed any characteristics which would lead you to suppose them able to do so. Most exasperating of all is the fact, when the exasperated realize it, that a considerable proportion of these beneficiaries enjoy the fruits of wealth without experiencing the burden of its most elementary responsibilities; for by the express command of the testators who have provided for them, they are forbidden to have anything to say about the management of the property of which they duly receive the income. There have been times, indeed, when contemplative people have ventured to surmise that there is rather less ultimate danger in the corporate Trusts, which have ensued with debatable legality

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from freedom of contract, than in our immemorially legal system of trust estates held for the benefit of weak individuals, which has sprung so luxuriantly from freedom of gift.

The fundamental trouble here is that a considerable and probably an increasing portion of contemporary vested property, though enjoyed by the living, tends to remain in the management of the dead. The practical objection to what results does not end with the fact that now and again the living, who benefit by this system, are vacuous or otherwise unworthy. Whatever the qualities of the dead, none can be more generally characteristic than their inertia; as a class, they cannot possibly be enterprising. A man who, from his office, was able and eager to employ all his resources for the development of affairs, can hardly do more, from his

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grave, than insist that what he has left behind him shall be lent only on the most prudent, and therefore by no means the most lucrative or the most useful terms. A whole system of law, controlling trustees and protecting beneficiaries, supports and shackles his insistence. Whoever is familiar with the present condition of New England can fill in the details of this sketch for himself. Instances of what ensues must occur all about him every day. People who know what they are talking about, for example, have been heard to assert that one important reason why the economic importance of Boston has dwindled is that the dead men of the past, safe and sound in Mount Auburn, will not rest content in their graves, but forbid their children to prove, by management of increasingly bulky hereditary properties, how far they are able

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to control the interests which moulder in the grasp of the buried fathers.

Mortmain—the stiffened clutch of the dead—is no new thing in human experience; and the very term itself is enough to remind us of how deep the statutes against certain forms of it lie embedded in the strata of English law. Such needs as brought about the old statutes might well now, or at some convenient future time, give rise to new legislation, thoughtful and beneficial. To disturb any condition of law which, in spite of the evils inseparable from any human device, has been found, on the whole, to work tolerably, is no laughing matter—even though our recent American habit has sometimes seemed to fancy it so. But to worship an existing state of affairs, just because it is habitual,—to repel all suggestion of modification which might

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bring it more nearly into harmony with new human needs,—is a worse blunder still. To say precisely what might be done by way of correcting the evils of our new mortmain, if they really be so great as to need correction, no layman in the law may pretend. One thing, however, seems fairly sure. Freedom of contract and freedom of gift—liberties which have proved needful to what has hitherto been held the healthy development of civilized society—might rest unimpaired; and yet much might be accomplished by a carefully drawn act forbidding for the future that the income of any property should be conferred by will on anyone, not evidently infirm, who does not, at the same time, assume the full control of it. A stroke of the pen might thus establish the healthy principle that whoever enjoys wealth must learn, at his peril, to bear

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the responsibilities of it. If under the circumstances he thrive, it will generally be because he deserves to; if he meet with what we euphemistically call misfortune, it will generally be because he has not the sense to avoid the catastrophe. At worst, the legislation which in that event may have ruined him, will not have been revolutionary.

Revolutionary, on the other hand, is the only term by which we can properly describe the sort of process sometimes urged nowadays as most suitably corrective of evils like that at which we have glanced. To take property by sheer force out of private hands, except in case of sore public need, even though the state give compensation for the same, is only disguised confiscation. So is progressive taxation on incomes and still more on inheritances. Anything like enforced community of

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goods, such as is occasionally urged by honest philanthropists and other gatherers of wool, is confiscation pure and simple. And confiscation, disguised or open,—in other words, the arbitrary destruction of acknowledged rights,—is nothing more nor less than revolution.

We may well seem to have been wandering far afield from this, our true subject, together. The point at which we have arrived may perhaps assure us that we were less vagrant than we had thus supposed. That something like revolution hovered ominously in the air about us throughout our digression about property must now be fairly clear. That it is imminent or inevitable in no wise follows. Storms have gathered that have never burst—and over lands less happy than ours. The chief features in the storm which many good

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Americans fear to be threatening at this moment are fairly defined. Very broadly speaking, the increase in wealth and the concentration of it, which have resulted from the great material development of our country, have tended apparently to divide the people into two pretty distinct classes—the rich and the poor, or if you prefer, capital and labour. Whether this means that a decisive difference of interests has at last arisen, destined to cleave us fatally, is not the question. Popular feeling, a pretty serious fact in an immemorially democratic political society, expresses itself as if, with various degrees of wisdom and folly, the people in general were disposed, at least for the while, to believe the antagonism profound. What is more, the tremendous increase in ease of communication throughout the world which has crowned the first century of

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subjected steam and electricity, has finally destroyed the old isolation of America. Our daily newspapers, with their letters and telegrams from abroad, and the floods of utterance which otherwise surge upon us from other countries, keep us in constant contact with all manner of radical eloquence uttered pretty much everywhere under conditions historically different from those under which we ourselves have grown to be what we are. The unchecked, increasing flood of immigration meanwhile brings into the very midst of us incalculable forces which have gathered ominously in old-world regions, drenched with class hatred. Wherefore, even though the trouble may prove only transient, there is grumbling and sometimes outcry all about us that things as they have been shall be suffered to go on only for a

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little while longer. Then shall come the millennium—celestial or infernal, as your faith may propound.

One thing, at least, grows clear. During its sturdy growth of what is now almost three hundred years, American democracy—both in its aspect of actual government, and in its inner and perhaps more deeply characteristic aspect of public opinion, or better still of national temper,—has honestly believed, that it is able to establish and to maintain a state of society in which all men shall, on the whole, be free to win what they deserve, neither more nor less. It has honestly endeavoured to prove this by its general line of conduct—not only by its deliberate acts, but still more by its instinctive utterances, manifestations and forbearances. Public order and private property it has sustained and defended. Whatever the

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vagaries of its unthinking phrases, it has never fallen into the folly of fanatical insistence that everybody must be and behave exactly like everybody else. Its genuine love of human equality has never gone further in practice than to maintain, as inviolate as may be, the constitutional security of the prizes for which the whole world is free to compete; and to welcome, beyond other competitors, those who have begun the competition under what have conventionally been held the disadvantages rather than the spurs of obscurity and poverty. Yet the end of all its efforts seems for the moment to be that one great body of the American people begins petulantly to cry out that another class than themselves is insidiously coming to enjoy the unavowed abomination of privilege, while that vilified class is confronted by open and in-

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creasingly insistent demands for adverse and open privilege on the part of those who pretend themselves, and who doubtless believe themselves, at present without it.

That such privilege, of either kind, is already a fatal fact, may certainly be doubted; that both aspects of privilege are ominously threatening can hardly be questioned. Which of the two is the more dangerous may well be disputed. In any such dispute, one important circumstance must be candidly admitted. Generally speaking, what is believed to be the present privilege of the few has resulted from what may fairly be called accidents of legislation. Tariffs, for example, and the various developments which have aroused so much popular feeling against the originally innocent word *corporation*, have been based, from the be-

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ginning to this day, on the decrees of legislative bodies whose avowed purpose has always been to work for public benefit. Not one such measure has ever been urged anywhere as desirable for the declared reason that it would favour any one class or body of the people at the expense of any other. The public opinion to which legislation has appealed, and with whose demands it has at least pretended to comply, has inflexibly required lip-loyalty, if nothing better, to the principle that a corporation which receives a franchise shall receive it as compensation for adequately performed public service. A protected industry, too, infant or adult, it has wished to have protected not for the special advantage of capitalists who want big dividends but rather for the advantage of the whole country, thus made more nearly self-sufficient,

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and sometimes incidentally for the maintenance of wages among the workmen thus kept busy. The nearest approach to avowed class-privilege, indeed, which may be found in the utterances of protective eloquence, appears in its repeated assertion that protective legislation may be expected, on the whole, to benefit not the rich but the poor. You may call this sadly hypocritical, if you choose; better, many think, you may call it unintelligent, unintentionally canting. At least, it implicitly admits that legislation which may perhaps result in the increase of riches on the part of the few, may never plead that fact in justification. All legislation must at least purport to maintain, with jealous enthusiasm, the interests of the public, which means the interests of all who constitute society, high and low alike.

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With the privileges now demanded, not for the few but for the many, the case is startlingly different. The class privilege now supposed to persist for the benefit of the few, is the result, sometimes accidental, and at the very worst assumed to have been unforeseen, of legislation avowedly intended for public benefit. The class privilege now thrusting its predatory hands through gaps between the occasionally solid planks of political platforms is far more bold. It demands legislation avowedly beneficial to one class of the community, as distinguished from any other; and we can hardly deny that it has already secured a good deal, nor that it seems likely to secure a good deal more. The disturbing feature of all this is the confidence with which it contradicts the traditions of our national character. Throughout the

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past we may incessantly have blundered into legislative acts which have resulted in private benefits rather than in public. Until pretty lately, however, there has never been a moment when an open claim for privilege, as such, would not have been passionately resented by all native American sentiment or opinion. We are going to change all that, reformers tell us on all sides, about almost everything—property, the courts, whatever else. Incidentally, they leave us to discover for ourselves that among the chief things they propose to change is our old national belief that men in this world should be free to win not their aspirations but their deserts.

There might well prove to be a case, accordingly, for one who should maintain that, if privilege needs must be, the elder phase of privilege—the inci-

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dental privilege of the few—is fundamentally less dangerous than the new phase of privilege now endeavouring to supplant it—the avowed privilege of the many. The matter is certainly debatable. The analogy of other social disease—of vice, existing on reluctant sufferance or formally licensed, as the case may be,—would perhaps occur. There is room, at least, anyone would admit, for honest difference of opinion in either case; and, what is more, the human mind is not so perfect an engine that it must needfully think concerning the one precisely as it thinks concerning the other, or even reason to closely similar conclusions concerning any two distinct phases of vice. Any such process of discussion about the growth of privilege in America at the present day, however, would probably end by convincing us that what is now denounced

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as the privilege of the few, and what is evidently beginning to be the privilege of the unwittingly incorporated many, are alike the creatures of legislation, itself based—at least, in due sincerity of pretense—on public opinion.

To legislation, therefore, supported by public opinion, and endeavouring to express genuine popular intentions in articulate form, we should naturally turn for constitutional relief from the disease of privilege which appears to threaten us. The chief, or at least the fatal symptom of this disease, is familiar throughout civilized history. The moment privilege grows secure—the moment its roots grip deep in the body politic—the malignity of its nature is made evident by acts of tyranny. Despot, aristocracy, plutocracy, or labour, it is all one. Benevolent or devilish, as you may choose to think them, all these

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privileged classes agree in forbidding freedom to those who chance to come within their power. Righteousness by legislation doubtless resembles righteousness in the sight of the Lord; so does righteousness by autocratic command. But neither is righteousness of heart; nor is either righteousness won by struggle through the pitfalls which beset democracy, in its earnest course from darkness towards the light.

It is no such righteousness as can be imposed on us by any enthroned privilege—of the one, of the few, or of the many—which should for an instant content or console the true spirit of our ancestral America. What we have really sought from our democratic legislation—what we may passionately seek from it still—is no manner of tyranny, however enlightened or benevolent. It is freedom from all tyranny—

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freedom to worship God, and freedom to help ourselves, as best we may. It is the freedom which should make us bear, each for himself, the full responsibility of its grandeur—the freedom which brings reward to those who use it wisely and strongly, while it proves its justice by withholding such reward from folly and from weakness. For such freedom as this we have placed our hopes in American democracy. Our hopes run high still. If American democracy—government and public opinion, alike and intermingled,—can help us towards it, the faith of our fathers—the faith which stays our own—will be justified. If American democracy turn tyrant, after all, implacably favouring either the many or the few in the tyranny of privilege which both seem attempting to exert, that faith must perish in the whirlwind, or the

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morass, of such catastrophe as we have never yet known,—the full reality of American Revolution.

By this time, we may well have come to feel as if we were deliberately and seriously prophetic. Yet we have already reminded ourselves that a Revolution, even though threatening, is by no means sure to burst upon us. It is a danger, if you will; it is not yet anything like a certainty. Healthy organisms can be exposed to contagion without catching disease. Between the Revolution which may perhaps bring our present national life to an end, too, and the revolutions which have raged elsewhere, there is a clear distinction, not often brought to mind. Almost everywhere else Revolution has declared itself against systems of government and of society which we Americans have generally agreed with the revolution-

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ists in believing to be outworn relics of the past. These we have proudly declared that our republic has replaced by the system which we have enthusiastically believed destined by something like divine grace to control government and society for the present, and throughout the future. Some such system as ours, indeed, is that for which Revolution elsewhere has devotedly striven; the watchword of Revolution has been the word democracy. Everywhere else than among ourselves democracy has been something longed for but as yet unseen, unrealized, untested. With us alone it has been ancestral and immemorial.

An American revolution would therefore mean something far more portentous than the ominous name of revolution might elsewhere imply. Monarchies, aristocracies, privileges in any elder

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shape may be attacked and may fall without exciting democracy to despair. But these United States where, as nowhere else, democracy has been long, loyally, enthusiastically tested—this eldest nation among the world-wide democracies of to-day—cannot change their nature without revealing to the whole onlooking world that democracy itself, the dream of the future, is no better than the nightmares of the past. An American revolution would be a confession or a proclamation, as you will, that democracy, too, has failed.

If such revolution ever came—a change malignant, violent, irresistible, as distinguished from the cautious and normal modifications always involved in healthy national growth—something else than what we have known as democracy must ensue. What this may be we can only conjecture. Even in its

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beginning it might well take either of two forms, both familiar throughout the records of human troubles and shortcomings. The first is that greater or less degree of anarchy which we popularly describe by the uncomfortable name of barbarism. Clashing of classes has more than often resulted in political and social chaos, where neither public order nor private property have been able to persist. The barbarism of the future, if it come, will doubtless have a different aspect from any familiar in the barbarisms of the past. It will be less picturesque, and in certain aspects, more terrible. Your corsair is a finer fellow to look at than your anarchist; a cutlass or a blunderbuss may be faced more coolly than an automatic revolver or a bomb. Picturesque or squalid, however, heroic or monstrous, barbarism is not civilization and never

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can be. Nor is there obvious need that a revolutionized America should even begin its course by lingering long in any such stage.

For, though hardly more welcome, the second, the alternative, form of change which may come to us through revolution is at least more tolerable. The name of it, indeed, is already creeping into something like accepted familiarity—the name of empire. That very word implies its story. An imperator was only a general. Cæsar was the name of a Roman citizen. Cæsar Imperator originally meant little more than General Grant. But from Cæsar's day to ours absolute sovereigns have borne the title of emperor because Cæsar was a general; and the name of Cæsar—in old forms and new—has been the title of emperors as well, strange to him in blood as you or I.

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Civilization needed force to help it endure, even for a while. Barbarism, which ensued, needed force to combat it. And empire came; and empire cherished noble ideals. You shall seek far for a nobler than Virgil uttered through the lips of old Anchises:

“Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento;
Hæ tibi erunt artes, pacisque imponere morem,
Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos.”

“Remember, Roman, thine imperial charge.
Thy force shall yoke the warring world with
peace,
Sparing the conquered, beating rebels down.”

Even in this thin English paraphrase such words as these must stir our admiration. None ever more gravely, nor yet—at least in the marvellous finality of Virgil’s Latin—more beautifully set forth an ideal of civilization. But that ideal of civilization has no vestige of

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the peculiar grace which has made another such ideal inspiring to America. Force is at war with common consent. Empire can never be truly at one with democracy.

To the old spirit of our country, accordingly, the ideal of empire makes faint appeal. More faint still, you will agree, we must find any appeal which might sporadically be made by the ideal of anarchistic barbarism. There are men among us, no doubt, particularly of the class unburdened with the cares of property, who would welcome abolition of all right to private property whatsoever; in all probability, too, you would find some here and there to whom the maintenance of public order presents itself as a superfluous vestige of obsolete prejudice. Plainly stated, however, none of these notions can as yet stir the vital national

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spirit of ancestrally democratic America. Empire and barbarism, socialism and anarchy it still finds unalluring when they stand before it naked. That it retains to this day so much of the strength of its youthful purity, the while, does not mean that it can forever remain serenely superior to what it instinctively feels monstrous. Rather it is beginning to endure and to pity what it once hated. The days, if ever there were such days, when our people were placidly content, are days long past; and the discontent which now finds utterance everywhere about us is growing to be tremendous. Tremendous, I mean, in the literal sense of a word misused so carelessly that we are apt to forget its prime significance of something which, whether we finally fear it or not, should make us pause and tremble. For if the dis-

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content now rising about us have its way, the end may be the end of our ancestral democracy—the abandonment of all that our conservative revolution won us with our independence, while we are struggling amid the confusion and the violence of the radical revolution conceivably to come.

Some such considerations as we have now been pondering on, perhaps too long, are hovering nowadays in the minds of a good many thoughtful Americans. It is probable, to be sure, that many of them—perhaps most of them—would have fault to find with the manner in which, as a man of letters, I have tried to set the matter forth. More than probably, indeed, more thoughtful and more learned folks than I, if they should have troubled themselves to read my far from authoritative statement of opinion beyond its first par-

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agraphs, would find on each new page something which they could complacently declare a new blunder. The real question before us, however, is not one of concrete fact, but one of pervasive sentiment—a sentiment now revealing itself in perplexingly discordant phases. That America is deeply loyal to its ancestral tradition of democracy, no one can doubt. That it is seething with discontent, inarticulate and articulate alike, is equally true; and such discontent means that the results of democracy have not realized its aspirations and its hopes. The matter, like any other which a man of letters may venture to discuss, is a matter of unformulated feeling, or, in other words, of common-sense.

Common-sense has long been aware of almost all the considerations on which we have been dwelling together.

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That it has generally acknowledged them in terms somewhat different from ours only makes its perception of them the more evident. And common-sense can never fail to discern the folly of making believe that simplified statement of anything can be comprehensive. We have no more told the whole story than the whole story has been told by people who assure us that the landing of the Pilgrims or the American Revolution of 1776 settled everything, once for all. Human affairs, like physical and living organisms, are compounded of good and bad, of health and disease, of constructive forces and destructive intermingled. Nothing can forever avert the end of man or beast, epoch or nation, culture or planet. Nothing can surely prevent their indefinite persistence with what vital strength may still permeate them. The mere instinct of

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self-preservation—the most surely wholesome, within its limits, known to man—bids us all do our best to keep ourselves alive, and to keep alive the things we care for. This can be done, common-sense assures us all, only by constant, watchful, yet not enfeeblingly meticulous care. The one great folly to avoid is the folly of those who still cherish the dream that there is anywhere a panacea. There is no one cure for all trouble or disorder—no philosopher's stone, no universal solvent, no fountain of immortal youth; but, nevertheless, there is enlightening cure for such human folly as honestly fancies that there may be.

Some remedy like this is what the threatened danger of revolution anywhere demands. This the instinctive common-sense of our people has long ago perceived. The deepest danger

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which now besets us springs from the tremendous, impulsive belief of ignorance and of thoughtlessness that, at least for political or social evil, a panacea exists. The most prudent hope of escape from the danger must lie in determined attack on thoughtlessness and ignorance. Those who would avert destructive revolution are sure, even though they may never have told themselves so in words, that they may do so best by showing men to whom the dreams and the prophecies of destructive revolution appeal how these dreams and prophecies conflict with all the sobering history of human experience. They are like the predictions of the fairy and the dreams of the goose-girl that the poor child's legitimate husband shall be a royal prince, with heavenly blue eyes, and a chariot as golden as his curls. She may neglect her geese in

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consequence, if she will; the line of conduct will benefit neither the geese nor her own hopes of earthly prosperity—that is, unless life turn out to be a fairy-tale. For most of us it never will. We fancy in childhood that it may. In maturity we are sadly sure that no such fortune awaits us this side of eternity.

So much comes to each of us from his own experience; but no single experience can extend beyond the range, in time and in space alike, of a single lifetime. To prosper, to conduct ourselves with any manner of wisdom, and still more to avoid the follies which should bring disaster on such scale as must come with revolution, we need more than the experience of any single human being can ever teach him. We need to learn the lesson stored up by humanity, wherein the experience of other men than ourselves and of other

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times than ours is pitilessly recorded. We have begun thus to learn something about the laws of nature; what we now need to learn is something more of the conditions under which men may live civilized, and of those which must fatally make civilization a mere memory.

We must acquire learning, and impart it, if we would combat the dangers of thoughtlessness, of heedlessness, of folly. Whether we have told ourselves this in so many words or not, we all believe it. For on nothing else could rest the fervent conviction of our country that the safety of the republic—which means the persistence of democracy, the control of privilege, and the throttling of revolution—lies to-day in popular education.

III

OUR NATIONAL SUPERSTITION

In substance, this paper was originally given as a Commencement Address at Haverford College, in June, 1904. It was published in the *North American Review* for September, 1904; and I beg to acknowledge the kindness of the editors who permit its reappearance.

III

OUR NATIONAL SUPERSTITION

IF the considerations at which we have glanced together appeal to common-sense, we have clearly come to a point where common-sense would counsel us to inquire something about American education in its present state. Privilege we have found to be insidiously threatening—particularly in the new form, sanctioned by so much philanthropic sentiment, which is now beginning to assert itself in favour of those who have least proved themselves to deserve it, namely, the irresponsible. What the growth of such privilege threatens us with is revolution, not only in government but still more seriously in national

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temper. Barbarism or imperialism, unwelcome as either would be, seem, on the whole, less abhorrent to our elder traditions than the senile decay of our immemorial conviction that American democracy may be trusted to maintain a society where each man shall be free to win not his aspirations but his deserts. And the remedy now held sovereign against these dangers we have found to be popular education.

In view of this, the experience of any one who has been much concerned with education in America may have a certain value. No such experience can be universal. None, honestly set forth, can be quite insignificant. At worst, it will show how good, or how faulty, American education now appears to be, when regarded from one definite point of view. And, of all possible points of view, none, I think, can be

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much more definite than that of the goal towards which the aspirations of those Americans who strive for the highest education within their reach are still constantly tending—namely, our universities. At our larger and older universities, to be sure, we are incessantly reminded of our own isolation. For every man who comes within our vision, we are told, there are thousands who never get near our horizon. Our best answer is that, for all this truth, the few who come to us have emerged from the many; and therefore that it is not quite unfair to form some opinion of the many from the traces of former environment common to almost all who have emerged. What is more, at least throughout our Eastern Universities, so many students, in various stages of culture, present themselves from all over the country that any prolonged

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experience of teaching at Harvard or Yale, at Princeton or Columbia—to go no further—can hardly fail to make some general impressions worth attention on any observer originally blessed, as we all happily believe ourselves to be blessed, with the grace of common-sense.

I shall make no further apology for proceeding to set forth, as clearly as I can, certain opinions concerning the safeguard of our country, American education, forced on me during twenty-eight years of service as a teacher at Harvard. For a good many of these years I chanced to be a member of a committee no longer in existence, the Committee on Admission from other Colleges. The principal duty of this committee, now absorbed by one which has in charge all questions of admission to college, was to scrutinize, with what

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care proved possible, degrees or other certificates presented as credentials by men who, after studying at some other institution of the higher learning, desired to become candidates for degrees at Harvard. I have no right to speak for any of my colleagues, past or present. That wise man who is president of Harvard College always requests us to make clear in public utterances that no Harvard man's opinion may ever pretend to more authority than happens to reside in the particular Harvard man who utters it. With this reservation, however,—that, throughout this discussion, I have neither the right nor the wish to implicate anybody else,—I have no hesitation in saying that my experience as a committee-man long ago led me to views of American education less complacent than those which now seem general. For, very

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clearly, there are few colleges in America from which we were not sometimes—I had almost said often—confronted with Bachelors of Arts who seemed virtually uneducated. They always supposed themselves educated, the while; and, what is more, the fact that they possessed degrees proved that numerous academic authorities officially declared these far from accomplished persons to be such as could satisfactorily pass the tests which are intended to protect the standard of education in this country. Naturally, I was driven to ask myself, now and again, what on earth that word “education” means.

The answer was less obvious than the question. The word is so familiar nowadays that we rarely stop to think how vaguely it is generally used. But, even though many of us may have framed something like definitions of it

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for ourselves, I doubt whether any of us could at present venture to define it with much hope that his definition would command general assent. For the moment, accordingly, I shall not try to define it; I shall use it as vaguely as we are apt to hear it used every day of our lives. There is a fact about that use which, for our purposes, is far more important than any definition could be. Undefined and indefinite though it be, the word "education" is just now a magic one; from the Atlantic to the Pacific it is the most potent with which you can conjure money out of public chests or private pockets. Let social troubles declare themselves anywhere,—lynchings, strikes, trusts, immigration, racial controversies, privilege, revolution, whatever you may chance to hold most threatening,—and we are gravely assured on every side that

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nothing but education can preserve our coming generations from destruction. What is more, as a people we listen credulously to these assurances. We are told, and we believe, and we evince magnificent faith in our belief, that our national salvation must depend on education.

Whoever has travelled much in both Europe and America must have plenty of visual memories to illustrate the present consequences of this national conviction of ours. Among the most dominant architectural monuments of the Old World are the great churches and religious houses everywhere erected throughout the Christian centuries by vast grants and gifts. They imply the abiding faith throughout old Europe that salvation could best be assured by unstinting generosity to the Church, which represented divine authority on

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earth. Sometimes, these structures were founded by corporate bodies—cities, guilds, whatever else,—who believed that special civility to divinity might win them special heavenly favour. Sometimes, they were founded by private sinners of fortune, who had been authoritatively assured that such foundations and monuments might have happy influence on the chances of their jeopardized souls. There were noble ideals beneath it all no doubt; but these noble ideals were complicated and obscured by various less admirable states of mind and feeling. The enlightened temper of our own age and country discerns these inferior motives more distinctly than the higher; and it has long been disposed to group them under the conveniently indefinite heading of “mediæval superstition.”

In contrast to the beautiful embodi-

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ments of such superstition which still make dreamily romantic so many of the towns and the landscapes of Europe, this surging new country of ours, proud of its enlightenment,—I know not whether our common school geographies still describe Europe as “civilized” and republican America as “enlightened,”—can begin to point to architectural phenomena of widely different character and purpose. In most of our towns and cities, particularly as you travel westward, the most stately and impressive structures are not churches or religious houses. They are rather the abiding places of schools, and colleges, and public libraries, freely devoted to the education of everybody. These structures, to be sure, lack the alluring beauty of romantic fancy; but they are the best tokens which the munificence of our country could give that

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our national faith is unshaken. On education, we evidently believe, and on education alone, our national salvation depends. Sometimes, our temples of education have been founded by public bodies, from Congress itself to town meetings, who still seem unwaveringly confident that, however lax they may be about other things, faithful devotion to the interests of education will go far to atone for their errors. Sometimes, these sanctuaries of our national cult have been founded by private benefactors, whose motives occasionally seem analogous to those which prompted the pious munificences of mediæval sinners. For, ask any American what we shall do to be saved, and, if he speak his mind, he will probably bid us educate our fellow men.

In all this, when one stops to consider, there is a somewhat disturbing

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likeness to the superstition which nourished the now fading splendours of religious foundations throughout mediæval Europe. The men who laid these foundations never knew precisely what they were going to accomplish. Assured, however, that religious foundations would at once work wonders and reflect inestimable credit on founders, they gave and gave, until the Church waxed fatter than the laity. Wherefore, at last, as Protestant tradition has kept busily in mind, the great good which ensued from endowments of the Church began to glow very feebly before lay eyes in general. The educational enthusiasm which now possesses our free and enlightened country does not present so marked a contrast to all this as might have been comfortably expected. When we begin to inquire, we presently discover that Americans in

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general do not know exactly what education is; and, furthermore, that they have extremely nebulous ideas of exactly what it can accomplish. They are content with the assurance that in education lies salvation. They believe so. They give and give, accordingly, with what looks very like blind faith, that they may thus justify those phases of themselves which most need justification. So far, no doubt, our institutions of learning have not waxed fat enough to excite much lay envy; yet, even already, American education is beginning to develop symptoms like some among those which aroused lay hostility to the mediæval Church. Our legislatures, for example, show signs of getting troublesome about the occasional freedom from taxation enjoyed by universities or museums, whose endowments, however much increased, never

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prove enough for their professed needs. Our comic papers have long found highly available many trite jests about the follies and the uselessness of college boys, and sometimes even of college girls; and I do not see how any one can doubt that American society will soon be obviously encumbered with certain vast, if respectable, mendicant orders of scholars—such as the male and the female Doctors of Philosophy.

The conclusion to which this line of thought irresistibly leads is disturbing. It has so often been my temperamental misfortune to express myself in a manner which has appeared frivolous that I may perhaps be pardoned for explicitly setting down what this conclusion at first meant to me. I have never in my life been more deeply stirred than when I finally realized what I have just been trying to explain:

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namely, that, in many aspects, the present mood of our country concerning education is neither more nor less than a mood of blind mediæval superstition.

My first impulse from that discovery was one of revulsion, of recoil. I felt utterly iconoclastic, like those seventeenth-century Puritans who defiled and defaced the glories of the English cathedrals; or like Emerson, proclaiming with all his serene insolence to what still held itself his Christian congregation that, for lack of personal interest in such ceremony, he would no longer comfort the faithful with the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. It was the memory of such honest iconoclasms as these which checked my iconoclastic impulse. Christianity is none the less a spiritual force because, now and again, its spirit has become

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enshrouded in a mist of symbols too thick for ordinary human sight to penetrate. Nor are these symbols themselves to be disdained for the mere reason that many honest people can discern in them nothing better than idols. The fact that truth is sometimes dimmed by superstition no more means that truth is nowhere than the evanescent fogs of our own New England seaboard mean that there is no sun. Rather, indeed, we should remember that there is need of vital sunshine to raise them.

Thus I began to ask myself what living truth underlies that educational faith of ours which, on the surface, looks so densely superstitious. And here I could find little help in listening to the apostles of the hour. I was trained, you see,—so far as I was trained at all,—when Harvard was still

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something like an orthodox school of old-fashioned learning. That training made me, so far as it made me anything, not a technical scholar, and still less a man of science, but only a man of letters. Had I been a scholar, in the modern acceptation of the term, or a man of science, I might, perhaps, have discerned in the vagaries of educational literature something else than a mere man of letters can find there. It is possible, conceivably it is more than possible, that modern pedagogics may be struggling out of darkness into some more divine light than has been vouchsafed us yet. It is equally possible that mere men of letters may be only sporadic survivals of a past epoch, soon to be extinct. But, all the while, it is not possible to deny that, so far, the utterances of our pedagogic contemporaries present themselves, to men of

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letters who are fortunate or luckless enough to linger in the twilight, as more archaic, more primally elementary than our own. The writings of many authorities on education seem to us like the fanatical proclamations of overconfident political reformers, vaunting untested panaceas. The writings of others seem like the alchemic gropings of those old pretenders to science who never got beyond explosive experiments in search of the Philosopher's Stone. At best, the confusion of tongues bespeaks an intellectual Babel.

As a man of letters, bewildered by such environment, I was consequently impelled to seek for myself what truth this bewilderment might conceal. Or, better, I was wholesomely forced to give myself the clearest account I could of how the truth, which firmly warrants our national faith in educa-

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tion, could be perceived by eyes like mine. One thing was soon evident; there are solid historical facts on which that national faith, however superstitious its vagaries, may justly and firmly be based.

Take a single example. From our national beginnings, the history of our country has involved an experiment in democracy greater in scale and in scope than any previously attempted. One difference between this and elder systems of polity is that the elder gave factitious importance to certain distinctions of rank, which we discarded, once for all. Manifestly these distinctions and the motives which they excited had not always proved able to place deserving men in positions of public control. One of our fervent national hopes was that unprecedented freedom of suffrage might tend to de-

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velop leaders who should really be worthy and able. Now, a familiar fact, obvious to anybody, is that, throughout the country, our first century of national experiment gave preponderant prominence and power to the profession of the law. An equally obvious fact is that, among American professions and occupations during the nineteenth century, that of the law was most likely to contain men who had availed themselves of every educational opportunity within their reach. It is hardly excessive to say that throughout the nineteenth century the American bar proved itself a true intellectual aristocracy. In free competition, it forced itself to the fore; it asserted and justified its recognized leadership. And the secret of its superiority seemed to lie partly, even greatly, in the fact that everywhere, among other men otherwise his equals,

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an American lawyer had generally had the advantage of more thorough education. This is only one conspicuous example of a clear fact; quite apart from what some people call higher considerations, the practical experience of our American republic has tended to show, in a thousand ways, that education has been practically worth while. Throughout America, to the present time, educated men have had a palpable advantage in any struggle for political or social existence.

Yet, when one came to examine the actual education which these successful persons had enjoyed, it seemed monstrously unreasonable. It was based on the traditions of the Renaissance in Europe; and these traditions assumed that whoever was ever to know anything must begin by devoting labourious years, which he should never see

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again, to the acquisition of a little Latin, and less Greek, and less mathematics still. After this painful initiation, and only after it, he might devote himself to so much technical study of his chosen subject or profession as circumstances should permit. The system certainly worked; to prove that, you have only to open those catalogues of New England Colleges which record the names of men who took the Bachelor's degree between 1800 and 1850. But, plainly stated, the system looked even more repugnant to plain common-sense than it was efficacious.

What is more, these finished masters of our traditional education were not usually expert in the matters which they had pretended to study. Even if they had been able to read the classical languages easily and to apply algebraic processes to the question of how to make

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both ends meet, there might well have remained in the mind of any critical inquirer a question as to whether the energy involved in such acquisitions might not have been better directed. But, after years of work in classics, most college graduates—at least among such as ever came to my knowledge—were unable to make anything out of a Greek page or a Latin which they had not studied up for purposes of examination; and in mathematics, their available attainment, as a rule, demonstrably stopped short with long division. This helplessness certainly seemed preposterous, not only to people who had lacked the benefits of the higher education for which the public was called on to pay rapidly increasing sums of money, but also to people who had experienced the disheartening dulness of it. Education, everybody agreed,

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was a good thing; yet to almost everybody its condition seemed unintelligent and, at best, unreasonable.

Obviously, this state of affairs needed reform. Obviously, a process which, even in an unreasonable state, was so generally efficient, might be expected to work miracles if once duly rationalized. For example, if years of reluctant struggle with Latin grammar could be replaced by an equal amount of intelligent study devoted to one's own language, it would seem to follow that the English language would before long be handled by graduates of American schools and colleges in a manner evidently better than any previously known or imagined. Or, if unintelligent recitation of geometrical propositions could give place to field study of the rocks and the wild-flowers of one's own neighbourhood, the children of

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the future would not only become alert observers of natural phenomena, but incidentally they would find their school hours—hours which had been so dreary in our time—changed to hours which should glow heavenly, irradiating a finally beautiful and intelligible earth. Above all, if there were any point concerning which the temper of educational reformers tended to agree, it was this: if pupils in the past had gained so much from unintelligent study of matters which did not interest them, and which, in any event, were of no practical use, there could be no question that pupils in the future must gain incalculably more from intelligent study of matters inherently interesting and undeniably useful.

The whole new system of education, from a child's first school to a man's last degree, is based on this principle,

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which we may call the principle of the kindergarten—not literally, of course, but as a matter of general temper. You must try to find out just what everybody likes best, and then help him to do it as kindly as you can. You must interfere with him as little as may be—only when his impulses take a form which threatens to damage somebody else. Incidentally, if you can induce him, from early childhood, to take pleasure in handiwork,—in making something ornamental or useful,—so much the better. And, particularly, whatever he is about, he should be incited to diligence not by the selfish spur of competition, or by the degrading fear of a spanking, but by the stimulus of delight in work, or, better still, by the encouragement of altruistic enthusiasm, such as sometimes gladdens the birthday breakfast-

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table of papa with a rather oily paper-cutter, sand-papered by the diligent hands of baby.

There can be little question that the new education, in all its stages, has turned out far more paper-cutters and the like than the old ever came near bringing into the light. In which parable we may include, once for all, its achievements in the way of technical and special training. The paper-cutters in question certainly serve a pleasant domestic purpose, and they do no harm; they are not of such quality as seriously to affect the business of those who deal in the commercial article. Under the older system, on the other hand, hardly anybody could make paper-cutters at all. But, granting this, there does arise a question as to whether this making of paper-cutters, in an atmosphere suffused with sentimental

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kindness, is proving itself, on the whole, a more efficient educational process than the less reasonable one which its sweet reasonableness is now tending to uproot and to supplant.

Such a question, I suppose, each of us must answer for himself. The pedagogues—and their noble army is at present innumerable—hold that, if the new system is not yet always and obviously superior in its results, it ought to be, and therefore that in due time it will be. The whole thing looks impressive in their habitual reading—namely, in educational reports. Wherever educational facts do not come within the range of your own experience, indeed, you will be at pains to resist the assumption that this new education is rapidly approaching excellence. All the assumption in the world, however, cannot belie experience; and I

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am much deceived if my experience at Harvard, during the past eight and twenty years, is widely different from that which must come to teachers at any American college nowadays.

In the first place, the new methods and the new subjects have not brought about a higher standard of attainment. English, for example, is directly taught at schools a great deal more than it used to be, and taught, furthermore, in what are believed to be freshly vital ways. But, so far as I can see, the boys who come to college, after due subjection to this invigourating experience, know their English hardly as well as the boys of my time knew their Latin,—certainly no better. In brief, human nature remains just as human as ever; and, no matter what they study, or how, human children will rarely learn a bit more than they can help. Teachers of

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pedagogics have much to say about delight in work. For my part, I begin to think that I was right in childhood, when I held such delight to be *prima facie* evidence that a boy needed medicine.

Again, and what is far more serious, boys fitted for college at schools where the new education has supplanted the old, seem to me, almost year by year, when they get to college, flabbier and flabbier in mind. I remember a talk with a Harvard sophomore a few years ago which will illustrate what I mean. He was a pleasantly disposed boy, as Harvard sophomores are apt to be; and, finding himself unexpectedly aware that his mind lacked cultivation, he did me the honour to inquire how I thought he might best proceed to cultivate it. I answered that his first business should be to take in hand some

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hard and solid subject, and therewith to plough out the traces of the kindergarten. The look of wonder in his big brown eyes lingers with me still. How on earth did I know, he asked, that he had been to a kindergarten at all? I doubt whether I quite succeeded in explaining myself. I had recognized the fact from his inability to keep his attention fixed, for any perceptible length of time, on anything which did not happen to excite his interest; and my explanation appeared not to do so. His culture, I regret to say, seemed little improved when I met him last, about to proceed to our own degree of Bachelor of Arts. The new education had him fairly in its clutches, and the buffets of life had not yet begun to loosen them.

Again still, the methods approved by the new education are sometimes star-

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ting: not very long ago, for example, I discovered, in the Freshman Class at Harvard, a student, of fairly robust mental quality, who found great trouble in alphabetically sorting some hundred or two manuscripts, endorsed with the names of the writers. A few questions revealed the cause of his perplexity. He had been taught at school to read and to write and to cipher fluently; but he had never been called upon to learn the alphabet. The order of the letters therein had impressed his school teachers as arbitrary, and therefore not reasonable; and, desiring to be purely reasonable, these teachers had presented the twenty-six letters to him as independent phonetic symbols, of which the meaning was to be inferred from observation of them as they appeared in various words. He could spell, I subsequently discovered, rather

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better than I should have expected. But what use he could make of a dictionary, the Lord alone knows. After all, I suppose, the order of words in dictionaries may perhaps be held, by reasonable pedagogues, irrationally and obsoletely arbitrary. An ideally digested system of knowledge should be organic and consecutive.

It was not so in our time. There can hardly be alive to-day an educated man of fifty who will not shudder when he remembers how many benumbing youthful hours he had to pass over the abhorrent pages of Andrews, or of Liddell and Scott,—more repellent, if possible, than those other horrors, the Latin and the Greek Grammars, which the methods of the olden time interposed between the vital meaning of classical literature and any faithful schoolboy. No one ever recoiled from

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that drudgery more rebelliously than I; few, I think, can have condemned it much more freely. Through many years, extending far into my life as a college teacher, I did not cease to resent the fact that, after ten honest years of work with Latin, and six or eight with Greek, I put those studies despairingly aside, unable to read a page in either language. The same was generally true of my friends and classmates. For years, it seemed, we had been victims of an educational superstition far more blind than any which has succeeded it. Yet now that the results of what pretend to be more enlightened methods are slowly defining themselves, I begin to wonder whether, evil as our fate was, the fate of those who have followed us be not, in a chaotic way of its own, more evil still. We were ill educated, no doubt; but, from my point of view

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as a college teacher, the younger generations often seem hardly educated at all.

And here I find myself using the term "education" with a meaning more nearly precise than was the case before. Education is a matter partly of information and partly of training. The latter phase of it seems to me the more important. A well-educated man distinguishes himself from an uneducated one chiefly because, for general purposes, his faculties are better under his control. Educated people, in short, when confronted with new or unexpected problems, can generally use their wits better than those who are uneducated. Here we are on purely practical ground. The simple question becomes one of plain fact, not of prejudice. What kind of education makes people most efficient for general purposes? Honestly answering this, though I am

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myself professor of a radical and practical subject, I am bound to say that purely practical considerations go far to justify the old system of classics and mathematics, in comparison with anything newer.

Though I cannot be sure that anybody else would agree with me throughout, I find some warrant for this opinion when I recall a recurrent discussion in the Harvard faculty. At various times, the requirements for admission to Harvard College have been altered, in the interest of educational reform. On each of these occasions, our more radical colleagues have desired that our department of English should propose, as a subject for admission, what they called Advanced English,—that is, a plan for the study of English in schools which should fairly be held equivalent to advanced study of the classics or

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of mathematics, and which might consequently be put forward as a complete alternative for one or the other. On each of these occasions, our department of English has unanimously declined to propose any such thing. And our ground, as I have understood it, has been that we could not conceive how any plan for the study of English in schools could be anything like an educational equivalent for the advanced studies which our radical colleagues desired Advanced English to supplant. In other words, the professors of English at Harvard have unanimously believed that a man who is going seriously to study English at college may best prepare himself for this chosen work by a severe preliminary training in the studies which have regularly preceded the study of English throughout the past.

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We have been reproached, accordingly, as not believing in our own subject; we have been told that we were blinded by outworn superstition. Is there any mystic power, we have been asked, in the fetiches of the schools? Can unmeaning words, just because they chance to be in Greek or in Latin, work miracles? Are we so mediæval as to bow awe-stricken before a scholastic Abracadabra? Questions like that are really staggering. What is more, our classical and mathematical colleagues have helped us less than we might have hoped towards the finding of an answer to them. They have seemed content to repeat orthodox formulas about the "humanities"; and the formulas of orthodoxy, highly edifying to the faithful, give small comfort to sceptics. Yet the fact remains that no orthodoxy can remain vital through the centuries

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unless its formulas enfold some truth which must give us pause. And what the truth is which made the elder training so much more efficient than the new is beginning, at least for me, to shine clear.

The practical aim of a general education, I have said, is such training as shall enable a man to devote his faculties intently to matters which of themselves do not interest him. The power which enables a man to do so is obviously the power of voluntary, as distinguished from spontaneous, attention. Any one, for example, can read the items in a newspaper. With no more interruption than occasional skipping, any one can read a novel which interests him. Any one can keep his wits fixed on a well-composed play, particularly if the performers possess the advantage of personal attraction.

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But the moment anything be long or dull—sermon, poem, or problem, it is all one—only those can keep their wits from wandering who have somehow learned to control them. In other words, whatever interests people commands their spontaneous attention, and accordingly such power of concentration as is naturally theirs. But if a man is to make anything whatever out of a matter which does not interest him, he must concentrate his powers on it by a strenuous act of attention controlled by the full power of his will.

It is precisely this faculty of voluntary attention which education, in the broadest sense, can most surely cultivate. The fact that it can do so is patent, when you consider what education has actually done. The faculty of voluntary attention, for example, obviously distinguished the American law-

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yers of the nineteenth century from their fellow citizens, of whom they proved themselves able to take the lead. That faculty clearly distinguished the college students of thirty years ago from the flabbier students of to-day. And that faculty, I believe, these various masters of it, big and little, whom we may fairly assume to be typical, gained largely from that elder system of education to which they had been forced to submit. Now no one, I equally believe, can gain it to anything like the same degree from methods as yet devised by apostles of the kindergarten. The elder education, to be sure, cultivated voluntary attention, not because it specifically insisted that pupils should unintelligently devote tedious years to grammars and dictionaries of Latin and Greek, or to lifeless variants of the extinct vitality of Euclid; but,

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unknowingly, it cultivated the faculty well. Through daily hours, throughout all their youthful years, it compelled boys, in spite of every human reluctance, to fix their attention on matters which, of themselves, could never have held attention for five minutes together.

No doubt, plenty of subjects other than classics or mathematics could have been made to serve this purpose and could be made to serve it now. You can hardly imagine a subject, essentially uninteresting, which would not reward plodding work with a similar result—with substantial ignorance of the matter studied, but with increasingly and lastingly muscular power of voluntary attention. The only peculiar virtue which I can feel sure to persist in the traditional subjects comes directly from the accident that they are

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traditional. As a natural consequence, they have acquired, through the centuries, a degree of precision not yet attained by their rivals. Even unsympathetic and unintelligent teachers can, therefore, keep closer watch of them. If the attention of boys who study classics or mathematics begins to wander, it can instantly be detected as vagrant. If it errs, its errors can swiftly and certainly be corrected. And the very fact that the classical languages are dead, and that the abstractions of mathematics must generally seem repellently lifeless, is part of the secret of their educational vitality. Of late years, it has often been supposed that training in natural science would do more for the power of voluntary attention, and therefore would have a higher educational value, than training in the old humanities. So far as my observation

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has gone, this has not yet proved the case. And one reason why it has not, I am disposed to think, is because the natural sciences are apt nowadays to prove a shade too interesting. In the end, accordingly, like other alluring things, they often excite an attention more nearly spontaneous than voluntary. If so, the study of them would inevitably result rather in technical information and habitual aptitude of a special kind, than in any broad general training, available for other service than that immediately concerned.

The classics and mathematics have doubtless been tyrannical; what is worse, they have been supercilious. There can be little doubt that the day of their dominance is past, and that resentment of their pretensions will long blind the educational authorities of our democratic country and age to

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the real nature of their educational potency. Of all educational superstitions, we may freely admit, none is more instantly apparent than that which worships the classics and mathematics as idols. And yet the newer educational superstition, which bows the knee to pedagogics, is beginning to seem more mischievously idolatrous still. For behind the dethroned idols there was an orthodox truth, not yet discernible behind the new; and the education which resulted from the elder system had a virtue which must somehow be revived, if the new is to justify the magnificent and generous faith of our still youthful America. No education, I have tried to show, can serve much practical purpose, in preparation for the perplexing diversities of practical life, unless, throughout the years of youthful flexibility, it delib-

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erately and persistently train that faculty of voluntary attention which only in maturity should be suffered to range among the matters of its choice or of its incidental duty. Any education, on the other hand, which does this work, is a priceless boon, not only to those who have won it, but to the country of which they are citizens. The instinct of our people is right, after all. To check the growth of privilege, high and low, and to avert the danger of revolution, popular education, properly directed, can probably help us more than anything else.

IV

OF EDUCATION

**In substance, this reproduces an address given to the
Graduate Club of Harvard University, in May, 1908.**

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IV

OF EDUCATION

SUPERSTITION is faith run wild; faith renewed and strengthened may spring from the pruning of it. If man were altogether a rational being, his instrument of pruning would obviously be reason. He used it boldly during the last years of the eighteenth century, and the experiment revealed his unlucky limitations. For better or for worse, we must sadly admit, man is not yet wholly and supremely rational; at his best he is only sensible. Wherefore, if he would rationally bring superstition back to the state of efficacious faith, he must content himself with the rough and ready tool of common-sense. When

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a man of letters, however far from confident, is confronted with such a question as that before us now, he may accordingly console himself with the assurance that he has as good hope as anybody else of helping towards an answer to it. After trying his best to show what seems to be the matter, and what can be done about it, he may, very likely, do little good, but he can do no particular harm. Even though he stray into palpable nonsense, good may come from his efforts. Sensible people, if they attend to him at all, may find the potency of their sense excited to fresh vigour by their consequent impulse towards righteous contradiction.

We are living, it seems, in a world where privilege for the irresponsible is threatening to replace the outworn privileges of the responsible. The growth of privilege, in any form, has

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resulted, throughout the past, in revolution, which incidentally begins its ravages by playing the devil with the privilege itself. Nobody but those who take mischievous delight in destruction—not even the privileged themselves, when they stop to think—can be assumed to desire either that privilege wax fat or that revolution ensue. Sane folks wish civilization to persist, with public order and private property. To sustain these they confidently rely on popular education. So far, so good, we comfortably feel in this country; we have popular education, enough and to spare. Yet, when we come to look our popular education in the face, it proves at this moment so far from satisfactory that, at least from the point of view of an American university, it looks hardly better than chaotic.

The story of disenchantment, in-

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deed, does not end here. Not only among our free and democratic selves, but all over the world, the traditional methods and systems of education have been tried and found wanting. Though they may nowhere have done much, if any, public harm, they have come far from doing enough good, public or private, to justify the expense of energy and of means which they have demanded from society in general. Society in general has consequently made up its mind to change all that. New men and new methods, new ideals and new subjects, have cropped up everywhere. Old-fashioned university people begin to feel as if enthusiastic chaos had invaded their placid seats of numb and obsolete order. This alone would be enough to disturb some of us. Our dismay grows the greater when we begin to perceive, particularly

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in other countries than our own, that the results of popular education, high and low, are not such as to confirm our complacent assumption that education is an essentially conservative process. The people who make the most alarming trouble are not the densely ignorant; they are rather the half-trained. Mobs are not invariably stirred to their mischief by demagogic labourers or illuminated petty shopkeepers; sometimes we find them straggling after men who have honestly won the peaceful titles of doctor and professor. There is a case for those who should maintain that education is proving itself not a sedative of revolution, but rather an irritant.

In moods like this, one's instant impulse is reactionary; and were reaction feasible the impulse would sometimes be overwhelming. Reaction, however, is the most delusive of iridescent fan-

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tasies; we can no more turn back the tide of time than King Canute could command the waves of the German ocean. Whoever has cared for children must have wished, again and again, that the perplexities of their inevitable maturity might be solved by miraculously reviving the guilelessness of their infancy. The laws of nature forbid the miracle. If anything like childhood ever come to them again, it can come only with the toothless decrepitude of senility. The past is forever past, stiffened into its changeless certainty; the future must inexorably be something else—better, we often dare to hope, worse, we are sometimes compelled to fear. We can do no more than guide its progress through uncertainty, as well as may be, with what faithful courage and common-sense may happily be ours.

If reaction thus be hopeless—if it be

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only another dream of enchanting folly—the true question before us grows a little more clear. Our present state of education is chaotic, if you will, and charged with some such explosive menace as always lurks in chaos. At best, it is a surging mass of novelty—of new men and of new methods alike—not yet reduced to semblance of order. Here lies the revolutionary danger of it. A moment's thought will reassure us. No such danger is a final certainty. If we can bring order, or anything like order, out of the chaos, things may still go tolerably well; and what for a while seemed our blinding superstition may justify itself once more as a saving faith. By way of starting ourselves towards this reassuring end, we can begin to see, we had best try to define education; or rather, instead of troubling ourselves about precisely what we

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conceive it to be, we may conveniently consider what seems, on the whole, the use of it.

Such a question, no doubt, might be endlessly disputed. Yet the longer the dispute should last the more likely it would be to tend towards agreement with an opinion concerning the function of education on which we have touched already. Generalizing the matter as broadly as we can, and thereby avoiding distraction by importunate, yet not necessarily important, features of detail, we can hardly fail to admit that among the indisputable possibilities of education is the fact that it can surely and efficiently make the experience of the past available for the present and for the future. No single lifetime ever taught anybody much; but nobody ever ended his life without knowing a little more than he knew when he began it.

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Thus, from eldest time, human experience has slowly accumulated. We can fancifully imagine remote epochs when throughout the nebulous course of innumerable repetitory generations, the elementary intelligence of our half-brute ancestors was unable to learn more than what actually happened to them taught it, or to show infancy much more than how to chip flints and to twang bow-strings. We can hardly conceive of such ancestors as really and truly human without the persistent parental attributes of tongue and rod. The tongue told what had been done, and what had happened, and what, in view of this experience, ought to be done now,—blunderingly enough, of course, and with all manner of misapprehension, but with the elementary vigour of assured conviction. The rod enforced the lesson, civil and religious

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alike, bringing artificial and temporary grief to those who, without it, might have come to grief incurable. In some such rude way, we may imagine, the process which we now call education had its forgotten origin. Ancestral man, the while, probably enjoyed juvenile certainty that whatever is so is so, once for all. By this time, however, man has ripened in knowledge, and we may hope in wisdom, until he finds himself possessed of a great deal more experience than he knows what to do with. History, literature and art have their lessons for him, despairingly unlearned a good deal of the time; so has the growing certainty of science, unriddling the heavens or driving the machinery which is beginning to make the forces of nature not our masters but our servants. The problem of how to manage our crude, colossal wealth of experience has

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insensibly become tremendous. When we earnestly set ourselves to the task of solving it, we are inevitably brought back to the prime importance of what we may call the arts of record—the devices by which men have managed to make clear to others than have had a given experience something as near as may be to understanding of what that experience has been.

In their elementary form, no doubt, these arts of record have so long been generally mastered that we are accustomed nowadays to regard them as comparatively trivial. At least, when we are concerned with the higher learning or study, aspiration or accomplishment, we assume the fruits of primary teaching as data, much as we assume eyes and ears and hands, nerves or brains. Yet if any miracle should ruthlessly sweep from existence the arts of

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reading, of writing and of arithmetic, human imagination seems powerless to conceive the nowhere where our descendants would be blindly groping. Yankee dialect displayed Yankee common-sense when it insisted on the sanctity of the "three R's." The little red school-house, grotesquely trivial though its aspect be, is deservedly a reverend symbol of what must be kept secure if civilization itself is to be kept alive.

Now the very diffusion of these fundamental, elementary arts proves two simple facts about them. One is that every-day human beings, down to almost the lowest state of intelligence fairly to be described as human, can learn how to read, and to write and to cipher; the other is that the means by which human beings can learn these accomplishments is the following of directions and instructions given them by

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teachers. Teaching unquestionably varies in efficiency, even when concerned with nothing more recondite than primers. In some cases, for example, which begin to seem less frequent than they used to be, children learn to read very quickly; and if they learn at once quickly and accurately in considerable numbers under a given instructor or a given system of teaching, we may rationally and sensibly infer that their teaching has been satisfactory. In other cases, such as those of recent methods which treat the order of the alphabet as arbitrary, they learn slowly and carelessly; if such dilatory inexactitude prove general anywhere, one needs no extraordinary good sense to surmise that the teaching involved is not so good as it ought to be. Such variations, however, do not much affect the broad lines of the case. That good teaching, or even tolerable teach-

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ing, can result in mastery of the three elementary arts is proved by the fact that illiteracy nowadays is, on the whole, an easily curable social disease. It cannot generally be cured, to be sure, by enticingly agreeable devices. Attempts to sugar the pill of learning, when they leave its efficacy unharmed, are usually found only to enhance its bitterness by their transparent pretence of appeal to appetite. A general pleasantry some years ago asserted that an experimental primer, entitled "Reading Without Tears," had given rise to more infantile weeping and wailing than any other book which ever came to the light of print. Admitting the tears, however, as a regrettable lesson of unbroken experience—except, perhaps, in cases as infrequent and as monstrous as those of infant piety in old-fashioned books of devotional ex-

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hortation,—no one would for a moment question that the fundamental processes of reading, writing and ciphering can be taught and can be learned. There can be no question, furthermore, that people must learn to read, to write and to cipher fairly well before they can proceed intelligently to learn much else, by any more elaborate process than word of mouth.

Far as these elementary arts may seem from the arts and the sciences held higher, they have in common with the highest one regular feature. In all alike the process of education—of teaching which secures learning—clearly makes the experience of the past available for the present and for the future. Language itself is only the desiccated consent of experience. It is so long since instinctive agreement began to make arbitrary sounds stand for definite con-

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ceptions—so long, too, since the arbitrary strokes of what is now the pen came conventionally to represent these arbitrary sounds, and so long since numerals slipped off of people's fingers on to slates or parchments—that we have generally forgotten what countless blundering experiments must have been made before that agreement began to dawn on which alone the meaning of these symbols rests. It is getting to be so long since not only the learned but the simple, too, could use these symbols generally and freely that we forget as well what a vast body of experiment must have underlain the conduct of teachers as well as of their pupils in the past. When you candidly consider the matter, however, you can hardly help admitting that the only thing which has given sounds their meaning, lines and curves their significance, numerals their

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potencies, and teaching what efficacy it has come to possess, is experience, whether forgotten or recorded. Remembered, recorded, collected, and half digested, this experience is now available for every human being in all civilized countries; and, we confidently hope that it will stay so as long as there is anybody left to need it.

Elementary and vexatiously generalized though all this lucubration may have seemed, it has now brought us, I think, to a point where we can pretty clearly discern some considerations which may help us to answer the question chiefly before us. We are trying to ascertain how something like manageable order may be brought out of the educational confusion which now perplexes many good men and women. The very simplicity of the matter in the elementary and generalized form on

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which we have been dwelling makes the discussion easy; and the principles there at work seem much the same as those at work throughout the whole range of education everywhere. We shall do well, nevertheless, to linger over elementary matters a little longer. The general assumption that by submission to teaching, it is practically possible for pupils to learn the arts of reading, of writing, and of arithmetic, we have seen to be confirmed by general, prolonged and repeated experience. The teaching of these arts, we may now remind ourselves, is commonly done at schools of which one sure function is to make the experience of the past available for the future. Though among ourselves, at the present day, there are many different kinds of schools, the greater number are supported by ungrudged taxation of the public, for an

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acknowledged public benefit. Among ourselves, too, at any rate, the responsible conduct of these public schools—the supervision of the teaching practiced in them, and of the discipline maintained there—is usually in charge of a school committee. School committees are not necessarily expert bodies. Generally speaking, however, they may be assumed to possess ordinary common-sense; and common-sense, applied to the elementary phases of education under their official direction, is usually enough to make them reasonably efficient.

When a sensible school committee—if we may permit ourselves, for the moment, to suppose it free from political, religious or other disturbing bias—is concerned with such phases of education as those at which we have been glancing, the question be-

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fore it is simply whether the arts of reading, of writing and of arithmetic are taught reasonably well. Do pupils at the schools in its charge get hold of simple tools without undue delay? Do they learn to read, I mean, to write and to cipher in what, under the circumstances, may be held a reasonably short time? When they have thus got hold of their tools, do they use them swiftly, firmly and accurately? The question is one of hard fact, not of fads or fancies. Take writing, for example. The important thing is that a child shall learn to use his pen as fast as his hand will run, and almost as unconsciously as he uses his tongue; and that he shall use his pen, the while, with such precision that no one who has to read what he has written can have any doubt as to which letter or which word is which. Apart from this,

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writing is a matter of taste. Whether his letters stand upright, or lean to right or to left, whether they be round or square, fat or thin, makes no real difference. Even the ugliness of shaded and flourishing penmanship, admired in days when professional penmen still sharpened their own quills, is objectionable only on æsthetic grounds, or because it distracts attention from the significance of letters to the ingenuity of their form. A school committee which should find that the pupils at a school under its control can answer questions in unaffected and legible handwriting may rest content that the teaching of writing at that school is efficient, and may conscientiously pass on to something else. A school committee, on the other hand, which should find that pupils at a school in its charge cannot generally write freely and legibly at ten years of

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age, may be sure that something is the matter—perhaps with the children, but more probably with their teaching. Then comes the perplexing question of what shall be done about it—a question with which we will not quite yet concern ourselves. The one clear thing is that a sensible committee should let satisfactory work alone, interfering only with work which is not so good as might reasonably be expected.

We may now pass on to higher forms of education; for the principles so evident in this elementary case seem to me precisely and completely those which should govern the directors of learning and of education from top to bottom. A school committee, the trustees of a university, or a ministry of education doubtless have many various and different functions and duties. In common, the while, they cannot help hav-

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ing the function at which we have been glancing in what seems its simplest form. One thing—I had almost said the one thing—which education can surely do, is to make the experience of the past available for the future. This may involve nothing more complicated than the accurate reproduction, by children, of lines and letters which consent, become immemorial, has made significant of ideas—such lines and letters as I am at this moment tracing on the page which will go from my desk to the printer. It may, on the other hand, lead us to regions where any such simplicity seems as remote as the garbless joys of Eden. Instruction may concern the facts of history, for example, or the principles of science, or the concepts of philosophy, or the conduct of life. It may linger anywhere far within the limits of unquestioning acceptance; but it may

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ramble at its pleasure so far as many of us can see, beyond any sensible verge of boldest conjecture. No matter. The one essential question before directors of education anywhere, everywhere, in all its phases, remains substantially the same. Does the education under their control assure the continued possession of the experience of the past? and does it assure this in such manner as shall make past experience available for the present, and for the future?

Simple to this point, the matter now begins to grow rather more perplexing. Elementary education has the good fortune to be at once demonstrably practicable and subject to undisputed tests. You can teach a child to read or to write, with no excessive expense of time. When he has once learned to read or write you can find out how well he has learned by the simple process of

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putting a printed page before him, or of asking him to reproduce, on a blank sheet, the contents of any printed page which you may choose to read aloud to him. There is no dispute as to what lines stand for what letters, what letters for what words, what words for what accepted concepts or ideas. The moment you turn to anything higher, on the other hand,—to history, for example—you will find yourself in a position of less security. What has really happened in the past is not always indisputable. The outlines even of chronology, the most certain basis of historic fact, sometimes grow tremulous. When we come to discussing the significance of what has happened to men, to nations, to epochs, we shall generally find it confused not only by wide divergences of interpretation, but also by incessant intrusions of distract-

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ing legend. It is only a little while since highly accomplished people made no bones of marvels, so long as the marvels happened long enough ago. Wise men have lived and died happy without suspicion that no wolf of anything but bronze ever suckled Romulus and Remus; rational folks would have had us assured, on the other hand, that Romulus himself is a mere figment of full-grown Roman fancy; and archæologists, on the Palatine, show us crumbling foundations of walls which they pretend to have belonged to his primitive city, destined to become first imperial and then eternal. Matters of more authentic record prove little more stable. Was Cæsar, for example, the almost divine creator and restorer of world-order whose name justly descended to all the grand or shadowy sovereigns of the Holy Roman Empire? or

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was he only a shrewd seizer of opportunity in an age when political forces surged hopelessly beyond all human control? He has lately been portrayed as little more than a canny special pleader, who happened, by the mere accident of his epoch, to make his pleas and to take his magnificent chances at an instant which has imposed the legend of his superhuman greatness on the imagination of all posterity. Is Mommsen his prophet, or Ferrero his apologist?

Something similar is true, to go no further, with the arts of expression as distinguished from the arts of record, even at their highest. There have been thousands, there are and there will be thousands to assure us that the fine arts—architecture, sculpture and painting, music and poetry—need for their nurture the care of those treas-

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uries of orthodox tradition which have long usurped the Platonic name of academies. Thousands more maintain, as thousands have maintained throughout the past and thousands will maintain throughout the future, that academies,—and the museums, the conservatories, the universities which support and feed them,—are no better than burial vaults for what was once vital beauty; that if expression enduringly true and beautiful is ever to gladden earth again, it must spring wild from without the walls of these splendid and sweet charnel houses.

Already we are come to a point where some gleams of order may shine through the bewilderment of the confusion into which we have taken a plunge. Valid accumulation of past experience, we have implicitly reminded ourselves, must rest on something as near to

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assured fact as in any range of human inquiry may prove within human resources. Such assured fact we may find, for example, in the unshaken records of authentic history, amid the nebulous swirls of distorting tradition through which intervening centuries have come to see them. We may find it, too, in the means by which light and shade on the flat surface of a canvas may be made to mimic the round solidity of human form. We may find it in those intervals between musical notes which shall conventionally convey to us the impressions of melody or noise, harmony or discord. Education, throughout its vagrant extent, must everywhere rest on some such ascertained fact; otherwise it cannot securely put us in possession of the experience of the past, to be used for the benefit of the present and of the future.

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We have implicitly reminded ourselves, the while, that human beings may avail themselves of past experience for future benefit in two distinct ways. The type of the first we may find in any of the fine arts; the purpose of it is the production of some piece of work which, if worthy, shall enrich or delight us, or shall delight and enrich us at once. Whether we are speaking a foreign language, or practising medicine, or designing a cathedral or composing a symphony, the test of our doing is the thing we do. The type of the second phase of human energy which we are considering, or, if you prefer, of the other kind of education, may be found in the study of history. This should stimulate us not to material production, but to immaterial—not to constructive rules of composition, but to wisdom in the widest possible sense, and perhaps

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to rules of conduct. There are two distinct ends or purposes of education. So much grows clear. All education must be based on knowledge of fact, but the uses to which this knowledge is put may legitimately differ. Our use of it, on the one hand, may be technical; on the other hand, our use of it may be philosophic.

When any one in charge of any phase of modern education, high or low,—selectman, trustee, college president, whatever you will,—is perplexed he may perhaps find that these simple considerations afford him a suggestion for guidance. To make the experience of the past available for the future is the chief end and object of the efforts he is trying to direct. At the present time, this process, which used to be traditional until it almost succumbed to the paralysis of tradition, is

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generally experimental. The test he should apply to it, in any stage or aspect, seems accordingly nothing but the test which he would apply to any experiment in other than educational fields. He should judge it, not by its popularity, but only by its results. If technical results are what he desires, the question should be not whether pupils or the public would like to learn this or that accomplishment, but whether they actually do learn it; and though philosophy in its full and inspiring scope, be a more elusive matter, the question stays the same when the nature of a study is philosophic. A pupil is technically well educated if, after due diligence, he can do skilfully what he has laboriously been taught to do; he is well educated philosophically if, after honest work, he can think vigorously, alertly and accurately about the

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matter which his study has kept before his attention. Incidentally, in this event, he will often have learned how to think soundly about other matters, too. If he prove wanting, technically or philosophically, as the case may be, he is ill educated; something is the matter; and the question of what is the matter should naturally occur before any one tries to prescribe a cure. Another thing grows fairly clear. Any one who finds himself charged with the responsibility of directing any phase of education should relentlessly demand palpable results from those who are actually conducting it—from the teachers who themselves are responsible to him. Whether their energies be directed towards technical ends or towards philosophic, he should equally require that these ends be at least approximately attained.

Suppose, for example, that the mat-

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ter in hand be technical—that the problem be how to teach a foreign language, French, or German, to pupils whose native tongue is English. The test of the teaching is plain. It is not whether the pupils recite well, whether their marks are good, or whether they have managed to pass any number of written examinations. It is first and foremost whether they learn, in no excessive time, to read the language currently—to pick up at random a newspaper, a magazine, a book, or a poem written and printed in these originally unfamiliar terms, and master its contents with something like the ease with which they master similar matter written and printed in the terms of their own tongue. Next, it is whether they can express themselves intelligibly, decently and with some approach to fluency in writing the strange language

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which they have studied; whether they can write letters in French or in German, and perhaps more formal compositions, too. Finally, it is whether their ears and their tongues are tolerably trained as well; it is whether they can understand affable foreigners who speak to them, and respond to such kindly advances in terms which the foreigners can recognize; it is whether, in turn, they can ask questions in French or German and understand the answers, and so proceed until the language, once a collocation of unmeaning sounds, has become a vehicle of human intercourse. If they can do any or all of these things, the time and energy devoted to their study has not been extravagantly expended. Unless they can, so much of it as has not been incidentally useful in cultivating their powers of voluntary attention, has been cruelly

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wasted. Elementary though this example be, it may serve as a type of all technical education whatsoever.

Or suppose that the question concern such a phase of education as we have called philosophic. The study of history or of literature will serve us for example here. Though the possible test of its results be less exact, it is not needfully much less certain. Again such matters as recitations, or grades, or examinations—incidental phases of the means through which modern education generally proceeds toward what ends it has in view,—are of no great importance. As was the case with technical matters, the first question is one of general accuracy. If a pupil who has studied history knows what has happened to a nation or to an epoch, somewhat as he knows about things which have happened to himself

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or to his family, his study has begun to grow fruitful; if he is in possession only of unrelated, half-grasped facts, it has been fruitless.

The very suggestion that unrelated facts are not history leads us to a second result which we may fairly expect from any such phase of education as we have called philosophic. To greater or less degree philosophic study should awaken and develop the critical faculty. The simplest possible example of this is appreciation of the comparative importance of events, of men, of regions, of works, of epochs. Such appreciation is far from the rule in school books. Some years ago, for example, I chanced to pick up such a work which a country shop-keeper, who could offer me no more stimulating literary diversion for a rainy mountain day, informed me was then used in the public schools

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of Vermont villages. Its subject was the history of the state. Its opening sentence, as I remember the words—I have had the misfortune to lose the volume—was “Vermont is a noble State.” Further on it gave a page or more, to an account of how a young woman of the eighteenth century, straying into the woods, came very near destruction by a bear, frightened away or shot in the nick of time by her brave Green Mountain boy of a brother. And so on. This instance of eccentric historical perspective is, perhaps, extreme; but it differs only in degree from that American edition of Stopford Brooke’s *Primer of English Literature* in which among many questions concerning the “American Supplement,” printed at the end for the guidance of American teachers and pupils, is a request that the unhappy young person to whom it may be

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orally addressed shall specify the principal writings of Jared Sparks. That good man was a sound historian, in his day and generation. We hope he is in heaven; otherwise he may toss restless in his grave, if intimation of what the hacks have thus done with the fruit of his labours should filter through the Cambridge turf. But after all, glimmering consciousness of what he accomplished while still in the sunshine should bring him peace again. Beyond others of his time he helped to show everybody why Washington was truly the hero of the American Revolution, and Franklin its philosopher. He meddled mischievously with their English, to be sure, unwilling that great men should be detected in descents to petty phrase; but he for one did his best not to disturb the big facts and values. Which is another way of setting forth how the critical

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faculty, normally roused to work by any kind of philosophic study, may well begin.

A third result may fairly be expected from the kind of education which we have called philosophic—not so definite as knowledge of fact, or even as sense of values, nor yet so general as either, but nevertheless attainable. This is that among any considerable number of pupils you shall find some who realize for themselves, eagerly or seriously as the case may be, that the mechanical processes of education, from infant school to doctor's thesis, are lifeless things and spiritually useless unless they make you ready to do more and more, so long as your strength shall last. Take, for example here, the study of literature. Names and dates and titles you may have stored in your head and in your note-books; influ-

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ences, too, and sources, disputed readings and illuminating glosses. If the study do not make you love your poetry better than before, though,—if it do not stimulate you to read as you could hardly have read without it, if it fail to make the beauty which the past has enshrined in deathless words more marvellous and enchanting than you had been able to understand at first,—then it has stopped short of its ideal end. It may have helped train your power of voluntary attention, and thus not have been all wasted. Even so, it will not have enlarged, enriched, and sweetened life. Rather there will be no life in it at all; and if there be things more repellently lifeless than ranges of lifeless learning, the Lord knows what they are.

If life be in your philosophic study, on the other hand, it may well prove

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the most enduring vital force in all your experience. Even technical study may sometimes tend to stimulate imagination and thus to impel people toward production which would hardly have come into existence without it. When it reaches this stage of efficacy, however, even though the subjects of its imaginative activity and the objects of its invention be severely, prosaically practical,—even though they be only such machines or devices as one used to think of when people still talked about Yankee notions,—technical education or study breaks through its own particular limits. So long as the study of a language, for example, is confined to the mastery thereof, it stays technical. When at last you begin to think in the language you have studied, to make puns in it, to turn phrases in it which shall express shades of meaning not

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otherwise so well set forth, and so to reason in it according to what degree of wisdom may be yours, your technical study merges into a philosophical. With the kind of study which we have generally called philosophic, such stimulus of imagination is more instantly normal. The ideal fruit of the study of history, I mean, should be reasoning about history; and if all went well here below, the ideal end of the study of literature would be not only the enjoyment of poetry, but the making of it. Here, though, we stray from hard fact into pleasant fancy. Your historical thinkers and your creative poets, we must sadly admit, are infrequent throughout the whole course of human record—your real ones, I mean, your enduring ones, with whom posterity must reckon. The best of them emerge, more and more distinct from what were once their

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earthly surroundings,—mostly matters contentedly forgotten by posterity,—by virtue of a marvellous quality for which we have no better name than genius. Gleams of it are common enough,—sparks, rather, which, almost before they begin to glow, are smothered by the blasts or the dust storms of life. It is only when irrepressibly ardent that genius will burn through the winds and the ashes—sometimes faint, sometimes blazing. Your smouldering spark of genius, too, is more often quenched than kindled by any process of education as yet devised by man. It seems probable, indeed, that genius must always be essentially vagrant, that nothing less than an independence sure to seem like irregularity,—nothing but bold disdain of all cramping and benumbing rules,—can resolutely command the scope needful for its evident display.

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Yet genius as well as dulness must inevitably be subjected to processes of education. Very clearly, the kind of philosophic education which least stifles it may well be sought for as ideally the most fruitful. No system of education can produce genius, and without genius no creative work is possible. A stupid system of education, nevertheless, may so dishearten genius that what might have been originality shall become doggedly conventional; and so sink into the flat ooze of repetitive insignificance.

Any system of education which should stimulate original creation would be happy. To demand such a result from any system of education, however, would be far from just. No one, besides, can deny the danger which generally attends too eager efforts to make education creatively effective—the danger, namely, of encouraging stupidity to

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believe itself originality, and thus of burdening the world with new accumulations of commonplaces not quaint enough to be amusing. On the whole, then, we may best leave genius to the power which makes it and infuses it fantastically into human nature. Our precise question now—if precise, indeed, be not too portentous a word for any such considerations as ours—concerns the results which any authority in control of education may fairly expect from the teaching under its control. Creative work we may place among the things to be hoped for but not sensibly to be demanded.

Certain palpable results, all the same, not only may be demanded from teaching, but ought to be. Whether the phase of education at any moment under consideration be technical or philosophic, sound instruction ought to give

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your average pupil a thoroughly firm grasp of the facts with which his study has been concerned. The best test of such accuracy is definite; in technical matters, it is skilful workmanship; in philosophical matters it is sound thinking. Such results as these, I believe, at least within the mercifully reasonable limits which are sanctioned everywhere by common-sense, educational authority may fairly demand from any system under its control. Conscientious educational authority ought to demand them relentlessly. What is more, if it fail, in due time, to get something fairly near them, it should relentlessly proceed to find out, if it can, the reason why.

Off-hand, people seem disposed to assume that there can be only one reason why the teaching of any subject should prove unfruitful. Nowadays, at all events, everybody appears to believe

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that anything whatever can be mastered by means of some formal educational process. If any given phase of education be unsatisfactory, the obvious and simple way to account for the trouble is to assert that the subject in question is ill taught. For some reason or other the teachers are inefficient; either they are incompetent, or their methods—a favourite word in educational discussion at the present time—are mistaken. Change men or methods or both, as the case may be, and the fogs will roll away. Alluring though this simple view of the matter must always be, it does not seem, in the full white light of experience, quite to cover the situation. Any one much concerned with modern education, at least in America, must sometimes have had the dismay of observing that such changes, confidently expected to be for the better, have led

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straight to confusion worse confounded. Under these circumstances, the courageous impulse is to try again. More than seldom such new trials have led only to new bewilderments; until at last there may fairly arise a doubt as to whether the subjects concerned are really subjects which anybody as yet on earth knows how to teach. Now, to my thinking, the reason why a given system of education proves, on the whole, fruitless, may be found in this second consideration almost as probably as in the first. It must generally be found, however, in one or the other. The reason, in brief, is either that the subjects concerned are ill taught or else that experiment has proved them at present unsuitable for systematic teaching.

The teaching of modern languages at our American schools and colleges may be taken as an illustration of what

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we now have in mind. It seems clear, as we have already reminded ourselves, that the chief object of this teaching is technical. After a reasonable amount of study, a pupil ought to be able to read, to write, and perhaps to speak the language he has been resolutely attacking, and to do so with some degree of fluency. At this moment, a profusion of official catalogues will assure you, some knowledge of French and of German is regularly demanded as a requisite for admission to many of our colleges; and if French and German are not presented for admission to these seminaries of learning, they must be studied there during one of the undergraduate years. Entrance examination papers in them are duly provided. For students who have not passed such examinations, courses of various grades, elementary and advanced, are duly of-

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ferred. Somehow or other, students manage either to pass the entrance examinations, or else to get adequate grades in the courses which are supposed to be more than equivalent. The upshot is that, in most instances, an American bachelor of arts is officially asserted, by his degree, to be able, at the very least, to read easy French or German at sight.

Now take the matter as it must surely present itself to any American professor, whether his teachings be confined to a college, or extend to one of the numerous graduate schools which are beginning so widely to demonstrate our cheerful conviction that the more you can prolong the formal process of education, the more you may reasonably expect from it. The professor, we will suppose, is directly concerned with something else than French or German—with classics or history, philosophy or

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science. He suggests that a student would do well to read some authority on the matter who happens to have written in German or in French. Nine times out of ten he will be met, on the part of students, with looks of amazement as blank as if he had referred them to texts in Russian or in Hebrew, in Old Irish or in the even less familiar terms of Eliot's Indian Bible. They have studied French and German, of course; they have duly passed the examinations which have been set them in these alluring subjects. They can no more read them, the while, than they could read the hieroglyphics of Yucatan, or the inscriptions on Etruscan sarcophagi. Sometimes your professor is more lucky, and stumbles on a student to whom French or German is not an impenetrable mystery. In such event, he is pretty sure to discover that the fine

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art of reading these modern tongues has been acquired not in American schools or colleges, but during a few months of travel abroad. A colleague of mine with whom I was lately discussing this matter—he was professor in an eminently respectable Eastern university—mentioned an incident which, I fear, most of us would find commonplace. He had proposed that a student should consult some book in German or French; and had been answered that the boy could not read the language in question. “Why not?” he asked. “Haven’t you studied it?”—“Certainly, I have,” the youth answered; “but I’ve only taken three courses in it here.” Which meant, I am given to understand, three class-meetings a week during three full academic years. The authorities responsible for any teaching which results like this are plainly con-

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fronted with the question of what shall be done about it. As matters stand, the teaching is practically useless. Can the subject be taught better? or must we, for the moment, give up the teaching of it altogether?

Or take the matter of the classics, as they used to be taught thirty-odd years ago. Latin and Greek may be regarded in some aspects as technical subjects, like the modern languages which our foregoing considerations will show not yet quite satisfactorily to have supplanted them. In one technical matter—that of grammatical detail—they are the most drearily efficient gymnastic trainers of voluntary attention as yet discovered by European man. In another aspect they may better be regarded as philosophic subjects. So far as they may properly be described as “the humanities”, revealing to us the

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primitive experiences of European culture, they are wholly so. When I was a boy, one had to study them every day for a good many years. At school and at college, for example, I had ten years of Latin and six or eight of Greek. My own experience was about that of my contemporaries. I acquired, to be sure, some detailed knowledge of grammar, and the incidental training of my voluntary attention was not to be lamented. After all those years of faithful work with texts and dictionaries and grammars, however, I was unable to read a single page of either language currently; and what scrappy knowledge of either literature I had acquired had been derived either from talks with the stimulating teachers on whom I had occasionally chanced to fall, or from reading books in English about the texts of which I could make

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neither head nor tail in Greek or in Latin. Something was evidently wrong. I still feel almost justified for having resentfully spoken against classical teaching, at different times ever since. My classical colleagues assure me now that things go better. It is welcome news—not yet widely confirmed, nevertheless, by conclusive evidence of reviving enthusiasm for classical culture among undergraduates.

Or take, if you prefer, a matter with which a great part of my own professional work has been concerned—the teaching of English Composition. Until a generation ago, little attention was given to this fine art at American colleges, and American students wrote badly. During the past thirty years, a great deal of attention has been given to it. The catalogue of almost any American college will show you an

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offering of instruction in composition which would seem to assure at least two results: Every-day pupils who have been submitted to this instruction ought to express themselves in writing with some such habitual and unpretentious skill as that which the graduates of a Conservatory of Music exhibit in the use of their instruments; exceptional pupils, who have enjoyed such advantages as are now offered, ought to become skilful creative artists—poets, if they truly be poets, of refreshingly confident technical power. That English Composition has been taught, far and wide, with intelligence, with earnestness, and with enthusiasm, must be clear to any one who has followed the course of this admirable educational experiment. That it has enjoyed unstintingly generous support from the authorities who have supplied the

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means for it is among the inspiring certainties of the case. That it has been welcomed rather than discouraged by teachers concerned with subjects which might well have found it an intrusive rival is equally and happily true. Sunshine never glowed warmer. It is time now to look for the consequent crop, they begin to tell us. The crop is not all that might have been happily expected. There are observers, indeed, who seem reluctantly coming to believe that the results attained, in the case of every-day students and of exceptional alike, have not begun to justify the expense of the experiment, in money, in time, or in energy. It is only fair to add that these observers are still at variance with most people who have given much attention to the matter. Authorities and teachers still believe the enthusiasm of the original effort more

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nearly justified than the doubts of its critics. The doubters, the while, will not rest quiet. For all our efforts, they protest, they cannot see either that every-day people write better than they used to, or that instruction in English Composition has anywhere fostered anything like a recognizable school of literature. If not, after thirty years of honest experiment, they warn us that the time is at hand for deciding whether the trouble is that so far English Composition has been ill taught, or that it is, at present, among the subjects which cannot be satisfactorily taught at all.

That there are such subjects would have seemed to me beyond dispute—a matter of plain common-sense—if it were not implicitly contradicted all about us. We may neglect such cobwebs for the untutored as the occa-

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sional Colleges of Oratory or of Elocution where, after laborious and expensive years, no one ever learned more than how to give blatant readings at suburban church festivals, or perhaps to open another such college in some region still innocent of its impotence. We cannot neglect the solid foundations on which now and again benefactors demand that we shall presently erect practical schools of journalism, of business, of diplomacy, or of whatever else, without considering whether any such school can practically be made to work. We may well ponder on the extension of older schools which is now becoming so frequent. Plenty of educational experts, for example, will assure you that if a two-years' course in a law school produced better lawyers than came to the light without it, a three-years' course must evidently pro-

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duce practitioners half as good again. This experiment has been in operation long enough for some sort of rough test. If men who have taken their degrees in law, for example, after a three-years' course—let us say between the years 1880 and 1895—are obviously better lawyers than men who took their degrees after a two-years' course—in this instance, between 1865 and 1880,—the experiment is justified. If not, it is at best questionable. There is one sound reason, too, why it might be questionable anyway: it deliberately keeps men a full year longer away from the finally moulding experience of practical responsibility. After all, there is no school like the world; as soon as anyone is old enough to risk the perils of it, some think, that is the best school for him to go to. Formal education is at the height of its usefulness, such critics

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maintain, when it is helping the immature towards confronting the problems of their maturity. No formal education, they insist, can ever be quite real; and actual life can never be anything else. Though schools can prepare for life by system and by mimicry, they cannot replace the poignant truth that on what you do in life may turn human destinies; and there are some matters, and probably there always will be, which life will never relinquish, even in part, to any training less arduous than its own.

The chances, however, are that when teaching proves so unsatisfactory as is now the case with that of foreign languages in American schools, as has been the case there with that of the classics, or as is perhaps the case with that of English Composition, the trouble is not with the subject but with the manner in which it has been taught. This does

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not by any means imply that it has not been taught honestly and even enthusiastically. As a class, teachers, high and low, have the deep virtue of unfailing effort to do their best. That is one chief reason why authorities find them so hard to deal with. It is easy enough to sweep into the dust heap careless incompetence or pretentious nothing. It is very hard to convince yourself that human beings, whom you cannot help respecting, whom perhaps you have grown to care for, have been wasting the very blood of their hearts. Such life blood is going every day into those efforts to teach foreign languages in America which we have found, on the whole, futile. It went into the teaching of classics during all the days when classical studies seemed demonstrably a waste of time. It goes now into the brave experiments still making all about

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us to teach Americans how to write their native language. Yet while it exhausts the teachers from whom it is drawn, it does not redden the veins of the students to whom they generously strive to impart it. That modern teaching accomplishes far too little is clear. The question is what we can do towards making it effective.

So we come to the somewhat simpler question of what sort of person an ideal teacher should be. First of all, I think, we shall agree that he should himself know something about the subject which he professes to teach; and this not only for the obvious reason that otherwise he can hardly make sure whether his pupils are learning it accurately or not, but also for the less generally recognized reason that the better he knows his subject the more likely he will be to impress his pupils

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as, at least in this respect, their superior. This second reason has brought us almost unawares to the trait in an ideal teacher which may fairly be held more important than any other—the power of making pupils feel that he is a better man than they. No human being can possibly be at his best everywhere: but every one knows that some seem to us stronger, wiser, abler than we; that others seem about our equals; and that many, in comparison with our excellent selves, seem, on the whole, poor things. Now just so far as any teacher, through any fault or misfortune, presents himself to pupils as in any respect a poor thing, he lacks one fundamental quality on which thoroughly efficient teaching must be based. The old story of the raw teacher of a country school who begun his first day's work by thrashing the school bully, for refusing

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to leave the room in the interests of order, is quite to the point here. So is the fact that the probably apocryphal anecdote was included, with a very rudimentary illustrative wood-cut, in an alleged biography—popular when I was a boy—of a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. This temporary teacher established the fact of his authority, before he tried seriously to exert it; from the moment he had the bully down, he was admitted to be a better man than any of the youths under his temporary control. He is believed to have taught efficiently, in consequence; and he had too much vigour in him to remain content with school-teaching all his life.

Thus we come to a deep and persistent difficulty, sure more or less to perplex authorities in search of effective teachers. An ideal teacher must have

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something like first-rate vigour. A man with first-rate vigour will rarely be content to remain a teacher any longer than may be needful. The trouble goes so far as to have excited, from a friend of mine, the paradoxical opinion that no youth who desires to teach will ever be fit for the work. Only two kinds of teachers, this not very authoritative personage went on to propound, generally turn out well. One of these groups consists of scholars,—of men who have a voracious appetite for learning, who count the day ill-spent when they do not go to bed in possession of knowledge acquired since they woke up in the morning. Scholarship, alone and unaided, will not provide them with bread and butter; to keep themselves alive for the vigorous delights of it, they have to teach by the way. The vital power of their teaching, the while,

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springs the untiring enthusiasm of their scholarship. Here is a superiority not to be gainsaid. The other group of efficient teachers my friend described by the less complimentary name of lame ducks. They are men who have had the native spirit to yearn for the experience of measuring themselves, in the full struggle of active life, with fellows of their own size, or bigger; and who, for one or another reason—often from infirmity of health—have not quite managed to hold their own. They include, he was cordially prepared to admit, the fledglings, who consent to nestle for a year or two in schools before they take flight to wider fields of activity—such characters as the Chief Justice who began work as a teacher by thrashing the school bully. The type of them, however, is to be found in the game fowl who has been brought down,

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early or late, but who has not lost the spirit which made him eager to fly high and far among, and against, his equals. The metaphor grows confused, perhaps, but not the significance of it; in which significance lurks one reason why, on general principles, people are still impulsively disposed to prefer a man for a teacher to a woman.

There lurks in it, as well, an evident reason why it is generally easier to find the right kind of women who are willing to teach than to find anything like equally impressive men. Among the assumptions now most frequent concerning the possibilities of education is the dogmatic assertion that teachers can be and should be professionally trained for their work. In some of our American states, I am informed, this opinion has resulted in statutes requiring that no one be employed in public

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school teaching of certain grades who has not received a degree from some institution of the higher learning which maintains a chair of pedagogics—or whatever else the mystery in question may here or there be called. Normal schools, of which the only particular purpose is to teach teachers how to teach, besprinkle the continent. Graduate schools,—which are mostly nothing more than normal schools in rather thin academic disguise, pretending to train scholars, but really trying to get employment for their own graduates as teachers,—enrich or encumber, as you will, pretty much all of our universities. The chief object of women's colleges, too, and of the general coeducational invasion of colleges not intended for women alone, seems to be little else than the equipment of female school-teachers with what look like dignified and significant

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degrees. Now to go to a normal school or to a graduate school, you must have made up your mind beforehand that you shall devote your life to teaching. In a woman this decision involves rather an assertion of ambition than any sort of renunciation. In a man of full native vigour, on the contrary, it commonly involves renunciation of just the opportunities which would usually excite his strongest hopes—the opportunities of wealth, of virile contest, of power, of influence among his equals. Someone has cruelly said, and yet with a trace of truth, that a youth who aspires to be a school-master proves himself thereby afraid to meet men of his own size. You can begin to see why normal schools and graduate schools—the nurseries of our professional teachers—are coming to group themselves, in sundry observant minds,

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with women's colleges, pure and simple. The women there are so much more numerous than the men, and, I fear we must admit, so much more alert into the bargain, that the poor men—some of whom are admirable fellows, after all,—get to seem negligible. In point of fact, the schools themselves already treat them invidiously; you will commonly find them in the back seats of the lecture rooms.

These various schools for the training of teachers are beginning, the while, to impose on educational authorities systems of almost ritual initiation into the mystery of professional teaching. They seem, at least, to consider compliance with their forms a necessary preliminary to any common-sense inquiry concerning the practical efficiency of a teacher or his work. If they go much further they will become patently mis-

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chievous. Training we may admit to be probably a good thing for anybody—provided it be based on sound knowledge, wisely applied. Degrees, as certificates of training, have undeniable *prima facie* value. Yet all the training and all the degrees which ever made any American teacher's name imposing in a catalogue can do no more than establish some slight presumption of practical capacity. A teacher who proves able to teach without them has no more vital need of them than of brown eyes or of golden hair; just as a teacher who, in spite of them, fails to teach well, is no better than if his name, or hers, had no array of letters to come trailing after it. You can see why some of us have little patience with those institutions of the higher learning which complacently boast that everybody in their faculties has secured the degree of Doctor of

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Philosophy; or with instances where years of good teaching are counted for little against the fact that an accomplished woman was never a happy college girl. In these days of reviving privilege, there are few forms of privilege more insidious than that which thus tries to base on formal privilege the professional existence of the very people whose chief public usefulness is to combat the pretensions of privilege, high and low alike.

What is more, there is a tendency throughout this process to make the training of teachers an end in itself, complete when the training is finished, except in so far as the trained teachers go on to train others. That efficient teaching, if it do its duty, ought to make the experience of the past available for the future, seems to be quite forgotten. Some of our leading scholars,

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as the cant phrase runs, content themselves, so nearly as observation can assure us, with attaching their pupils to their own learned persons. Thereupon they proceed to pump into these absorbent parasites exactly what they themselves contain until, by mere force of inertia, the duly inflated new organisms breaks away—as nearly like the old as weak things can be like things inherently strong. The infirmities of human nature doubtless demand such practices or something like them. It is hard, though, to detect in their outcomes much more than such abortive uselessness as might attend efforts, on the part of earnest human beings, to reproduce themselves by the seemingly convenient process of fissiparous propagation. Beginning somewhere, they end, at best, nowhere else.

Somewhere else than amid this thick-

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ening confusion, we must seek the light which we are now trying to discern. We have lingered long enough over the perplexities which must surround educational authorities who find that the education in their charge is not substantially effective—that it does not practically make the experience of the past available for the future. The first thing for them to suspect, we have agreed, is that they need better teaching—not, as a rule, teachers of more edifying moral worth, but teachers who shall manage to make pupils learn more and learn better than pupils learn now. Ideal teaching should direct work which can show as its result a strengthened grasp of fact, and an ability to use such firmly grasped fact for ends either philosophic or technical, as the case may be. Any teaching which falls short of these ends should

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be sharply scrutinized. It may be that the trouble lies no deeper than in methods; it may be, that the men or women themselves whatever their personal virtues, are incompetent; it may be that the task they have undertaken is beyond the present power of any teaching whatever.

Here, for example, we may recall what we brought to mind concerning the study of foreign languages in America at the present day. The general failure which has resulted from much honest effort to teach them might well give rise to opinion that they are among the hapless subjects experimentally shown to be still beyond the range of practical instruction. To go no further, however, any one who has observed the results of the teaching of English in the common schools of France or of Germany, of Holland or of Sweden, can

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hardly fail to agree that in many cases English has been taught admirably. If foreigners can teach our language efficiently we ought, on general principles, to teach theirs at least tolerably. The trouble, in this instance, seems to be not that a foreign language cannot be taught but that as yet American teachers do not know how to teach one. Perhaps our present teachers can discover better methods of teaching. If not, we must find better teachers. The thing, if worth doing, can demonstrably be done.

Or consider the case of the classics in the last generation, on which we also touched. People can be taught, in no excessive time, to read the Latin language, and probably the Greek, too. If you are beset with any doubts on this point you have only to remember that for something like a thousand years

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after Latin ceased to be a normally living language, it was used as a vehicle of instruction at every university throughout Europe. What is more, the classics can be read as literature; otherwise there would have been no such thing as the Renaissance, and bewigged members of Parliament could never have quoted Horace. The trouble grows pretty clear. Old-fashioned classical teaching complacently assumed that its object was to make everybody who was submitted to it a thorough technical scholar; whereas what we really demand from classical teaching nowadays is not a world full of learned professors, but all the culture which the classics can possibly stimulate. In the Greek days and the Roman, the primal civilization of Europe gave to all posterity ideals and forms of thought which we now recognize as at once

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purely European and inevitably ancestral to ourselves. The more of us who can learn to know what classical literature means, the better for everybody; but we may generally leave to the grammarians the names by which the poets, or more often their commentators, happened to call this or that mood or tense or case. As human beings, we are concerned only with the human significance of case or tense or mood when used in lines which have lived to be immortal vehicles of human thought and emotion. Your professor must know all about them, of course; so must your student who is preparing for a professorship; but you or I need only read, and enjoy, and think. The trouble here was with the ideal; and that ideal, our classical friends assure us, they are changing.

With the other instance at which we

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happened to glance—that of English Composition—the case may perhaps be held different, or at least, less certain. Very likely, to be sure, the trouble still lies with the teachers or with their teaching. Certainly the whole admirable experiment of the past thirty years has inevitably been only experimental. Comparative failure, even though admitted, need not bring discouragement. What is more, there can be no doubt that other languages than English can be taught by means of direct instruction in the use of them. Not to dwell on the teaching of Latin composition which for centuries gave something like mastery of this classic language to every educated man in Europe, and which gives some control of it even now to every duly trained ecclesiastic of the ancestral church, we cannot fail to see that our nearest

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European neighbours, the French, can be taught to write their own tongue with admirably idiomatic skill and precision. Though French books have their faults, their faults are rarely faults of style. Again, there seems no valid reason why teachers of English should not accomplish the kind of thing which has evidently been accomplished by teachers of French.

Just here, however, some are beginning to suspect, may lie a demonstrably insuperable difficulty. Idiomatic Latin, when you come to consider its history, proves to have been based, from the beginning, on severe rhetorical study. Idiomatic French has, on the whole, been based on some such study for at least three hundred years. No one who has not been trained in rhetoric, as we generally call the subject hereabouts and nowadays,—no one at least

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who has not profoundly felt the influence of rhetorical teaching,—can possibly write French or Latin idiomatically; for rhetoric, directly studied, is at the core of both idioms. With English, the case is historically different. What we now call idiomatic English is the style used by writers of the English language from the time of Queen Elizabeth to the present day. Broadly speaking, not one of these writers ever gave much attention to the direct study of English Composition. Almost all of them had elementary training in Latin, and in many cases their training went far beyond the elementary stage. Almost all of them were familiar with the superb ritual of the Church of England. Hardly any of them was half so ignorant as almost everybody hereabouts is getting to be of the English Bible. And almost without exception,

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whenever they wrote English, they were far more concerned with what they were writing about than with any question of how they turned their phrases. English, indeed, has been called the least consciously rhetorical language in all literary history. Thus there begins to appear a plain historical reason why, when one gets beyond grammatical details and elementary correctness, English may perhaps prove more stubborn to rhetoricians than any other language with which they have tried to deal. For the very essence of it historically seems this spirit of rhetorical vagrancy; and the very idiom of it seems bound up in the fact that it has never yet been masterfully acquired by means of direct study. You can teach pupils to use English words, beyond doubt; you can teach them to put together sentences and paragraphs with

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meticulous care. Whether you can teach them to write idiomatic English by any system more direct than the unconsciously free one through which the masterpieces of idiomatic English have come into their centuries of being remains to be experimentally proved. Sundry good people, as we have seen, at present incline to think that experiment has gone far to prove the achievement beyond human power.

Any such conclusion would still be premature. All which anybody can as yet assert is that, in the opinion of occasional observers, no teachers and no methods have as yet justified, by irrefutable results, the still general faith that if you honestly try to teach youths how to write English, they will learn to write it with idiomatic freedom. The task is worth trying a good deal longer. If the end can be achieved,

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every disheartening experiment will have been justified by the ultimate result. And even if the end be never achieved, not a bit of the experiment need be regretted. For it will have proved, at last, that the only way to write English is to make sure of what you mean and then to express it, as well as you can, in the terms and the rhythms which unconfined English usage has made wildly idiomatic. One can always comment, in passing, on this turn of phrase or on that. There was never a page written which might not have been written better. But English style, like happiness, may finally turn out to be most nearly attainable only by those who never directly seek it.

This problem, of English Composition at the present time, seems to me as happy as can be found to indicate how educational authority may wisely deal

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with the chaos—the disorder, if you prefer, or the anarchy—which must sometimes make modern education seem hopeless. Such teaching as we have had hitherto, we may candidly admit, has failed and still fails satisfactorily to serve the purpose for which it has been established and maintained. Very well. We must try new experiments, honestly and generously. We must see what new methods will do, or new teachers. If, after due time, they, too, come to little, the wiser course is to be honest with everybody. Here is another Philosopher's Stone, another universal solvent, another machine of perpetual motion, another elixir of life. The lives which were spent in search of these flyaways were not wasted. There is vastly less dissipation of human energy now because of what may sometimes seem the tragic futilities of the past.

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And how much may always be accomplished by due concentration of human energy we may learn from the whole history of that past which lies open for those to study who will.

Wise concentration, we may agree, is what the education of our time plainly demands. Where education can most wisely be concentrated must still be learned by experiment. The enthusiastic diffusion of the moment has broken the old bonds. So much the better; for they would never have been broken if they had not been almost worn out. There is now growing about us, however, an impotence of diffusion as mischievous as any which ever came from the paralysis of hypnotized concentration. The diffusion which was once our strength has become so inflated that now it is rather our weakness. We must set our wits to work over

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our consequent problem, We must ascertain what can be done and what cannot, what can be done well and what best, what is really useful when pupils emerge from schools into life, and what useless. If English Composition can be well taught, let it be taught far and wide. If not, let us reluctantly give up pretending that we know how to teach this evidently practicable art. If the classics can be made once more the stimulants of culture, give them all the honour they ever had; but do not give them a bit of honour which they do not incontestably deserve. If foreign languages can be mastered in our schools, let them be taught there, more than ever; if not, do not console yourself by the mere fact that the names of them burden programmes. If three years in law schools make better lawyers than two, let us insist on three; if

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not, let us candidly admit that two are enough. If Trade Schools make handiwork more skilful, let us have Trade Schools. If Schools of Business, or of Journalism or of Diplomacy provide us with better diplomats and journalists and men of affairs, so much the better for the whole world. If not, the sooner you close the doors of them, the wiser the future will find you. If Normal Schools and Graduate Schools and all manner of degrees produce teachers who can teach their pupils better than pupils were taught in old times, let us welcome more of them and more. If not, let us make them understand that they must prove their claim to our respect before we shall submit much longer to their growing demands for privilege. Some of these phases of education will surely prove their worth. Almost as surely, some of them will

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show themselves pretty nearly useless. The educational authority which shall most wisely concentrate its effort in the future will be that which soonest and most candidly distinguishes between achievements which are within its power and achievements which are not.

Baffling though such generalization as ours may well seem, it has, perhaps, brought us to a point where we may summarize our thoughts of education more helpfully than we could have done without it. The education of the past, we have agreed, had the great virtue of training and strengthening voluntary attention. Here its general efficacy came to an end. It neither put people in firm possession of any wide range of fact nor yet helped them much to use what facts they possessed for either technical or philosophic purposes. At best, we may agree that,

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both technically and philosophically, it came far short of ideal results. Confronted with the conditions of modernity, the world grew into new and pressing need of technical training and of philosophic too, better than the old education could afford it. The need was insistent. It stays so. On the technical power of any race or nation must ultimately depend its material strength; on its philosophic power, in the widest sense, must depend its spiritual strength, and on its spiritual strength to no small degree must rest its political. So the education of the future must accomplish more than was ever accomplished by that of the past. It must train voluntary attention as vigorously as ever—reviving the relaxed muscularity of elder days. It must submit itself, the while, to a new and fiercer test. It must prove the validity of its methods

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by either technical or philosophic achievement—and at its best, we hope, by achievement where technical power and philosophic are fused and intermingled.

So it behooves educational authority gravely to consider what can be brought to pass by formal educational process, and what must be reserved for the more inexorable teaching of actual life. Once assured of this, even momentarily, authority can concentrate its efforts on those matters which, for the while, it can handle best. There is no conceivable field of its activity where its ultimate work will be much else than the making of past experience available for the future. If this task be confronted earnestly, though,—if the education of the future have the courage to recognize its limits,—we can hardly fail, in the end, to work the marvel which super-

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stitution has fancied that even the chaotic education of the passing moment might work by the mere fact of its innocently pretentious existence. For the true lesson of experience is never a lesson of destruction. Learned faithfully, and taught conscientiously, it can still do more than all the force and all the outcries to check the tyranny of privilege and to avert the folly of revolution. At least, so things must still seem to such common-sense as lingers among men of letters.

